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A TWO-PART SUPPLEMENT
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The Writer's Life



Thousands of Americans—young and old—aspire to become writers. Few of them will write deathless works, yet a surprising number will, in the end, earn their livelihood through their skill with words. Why? What is the mysterious thing called “writing talent”? What other qualities must a man or woman have to make the grade in the tough, complicated, and sometimes devious literary world? Does a writer measure “success” by the size of his bank account or are there hidden rewards? Where is his place on the status totem pole? These—and a dozen other questions—are discussed candidly, sharply, and wittily by some of the foremost inhabitants of the writer's world: Norman Podhoretz, Isaac Bashevis Singer, Bruce Jay Friedman, Alan Pryce-Jones, Alan Levy, John le Carré, Gore Vidal, Louis Simpson, Stanley Kauffmann, David Dempsey, John Weightman and others.

Also in the October issue: Tom Wicker on *Johnson and Moyers*, Maya Pines on *The Coming Upheaval in Psychiatry*, Murray Morgan on *The Most Powerful Governor in the USA*, Bud Davis on *Football's Galloping Disaster*, a look at the new campus movies, plus a full complement of reviews and features.

NOTES

SUSAN SONTAG's new book of essays, **Against Interpretation**, which will be published by Farrar, Straus & Giroux in January, contains a longer version of “On Style.” . . . “White Days and Red Nights” is from a book of memoirs by FRANK CONROY. Viking will bring it out next spring. . . .

ROGER GARIS teaches English at Wellesley. His **Dickens Theater** was published by Oxford. . . . G. R. SWENSON is a free-lance art critic living in New York. . . . Oxford has just put out LEO BERSANI's new book, **Marcel Proust: The Fictions of Life and of Art**. . . . HAROLD BLOOM's essay on **Frankenstein** will appear as the Afterword to the New American Library-Signet Classic edition of Mary Shelley's novel. . . . NORM FRUCHTER's first novel was **Coat Upon a Stick**.

Mr. Fruchter is an editor of **Studies on the Left**. . . . Our sincerest apologies to Gerard Malanga. Not only did we spell his name wrong on the cover, but we inadvertently rewrote both Mr. Malanga and Ezra Pound by changing the title of Mr. Malanga's poem, which should have been “**I AM HERE WAITING THE SUNRISE**.”



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Leslie A. Fiedler

THE NEW MUTANTS

A realization that the legitimate functions of literature are bewilderingly, almost inexhaustibly various has always exhilarated poets and dismayed critics. And critics, therefore, have sought age after age to legislate limits to literature—legitimizing certain of its functions and disavowing others—in hope of insuring to themselves the exhilaration of which they have felt unjustly deprived, and providing for poets the dismay which the critics at least have thought good for them.

Such shifting and exclusive emphasis is not, however, purely the product of critical malice, or even of critical principle. Somehow every period is, to begin with, especially aware of certain functions of literature and especially oblivious to others: endowed with a special sensitivity and a complementary obtuseness, which, indeed, give to that period its characteristic flavor and feel. So, for instance, the Augustan Era is marked by sensitivity in regard to the uses of diction, obtuseness in regard to those of imagery.

What the peculiar obtuseness of the present age may be I find it difficult to say (being its victim as well as its recorder), perhaps toward the didactic or certain modes of the sentimental. I am reasonably sure, however, that our period is acutely aware of the sense in which literature if not invents, at least collaborates in the invention of time. The beginnings of that awareness go back certainly to the beginnings of the Renaissance, to Humanism as a self-conscious movement; though a critical development occurred toward the end of the eighteenth century with the dawning of the Age of Revolution. And we may have reached a second critical point right now.

At any rate, we have long been aware (in the last decades un-

comfortably aware) that a chief function of literature is to express and in part to create not only theories of time but also attitudes toward time. Such attitudes constitute, however, a politics as well as an esthetics; or, more properly perhaps, a necessary mythological substratum of politics—as, in fact, the conventional terms reactionary, conservative, revolutionary indicate: all involving stances toward the past.

It is with the past, then, that we must start, since the invention of the past seems to have preceded that of the present and the future; and since we are gathered in a university at whose heart stands a library¹—the latter, like the former, a visible monument to the theory that a chief responsibility of literature is to preserve and perpetuate the past. Few universities are explicitly (and none with any real degree of confidence) dedicated to this venerable goal any longer. The Great Books idea (which once transformed the University of Chicago and lives on now in provincial study groups) was perhaps its last desperate expression. Yet the shaky continuing existence of the universities and the building of new college libraries (with matching Federal funds) remind us not only of that tradition but of the literature created in its name: the neo-epic, for instance, all the way from Dante to Milton; and even the frantically nostalgic Historical Romance, out of the counting house by Sir Walter Scott.

Obviously, however, literature has a contemporary as well as a traditional function. That is to say, it may be dedicated to illuminating the present and the meaning of the present, which is, after all, no more given than the past. Certainly the modern or bourgeois novel was thus contemporary in the hands of its great inventors, Richardson, Fielding, Smollett and Sterne; and it became contemporary again—with, as it were, a sigh of relief—when Flaubert, having plunged deep into the Historical Romance, emerged once more into the present of Emma Bovary. But the second function of the novel tends to transform itself into a third: a revolutionary or prophetic or futurist function; and it is with the latter that I am here concerned.

Especially important for our own time is the sense in which

1 "The New Mutants" is a written version of a talk given by Mr. Fiedler at the Conference on the Idea of The Future held at Rutgers, in June, 1965. The conference was sponsored by Partisan Review and the Congress for Cultural Freedom, with the cooperation of Rutgers, The State University.

literature first conceived the possibility of the future (rather than an End of Time or an Eternal Return, an Apocalypse or Second Coming); and then furnished that future in joyous or terrified anticipation, thus preparing all of us to inhabit it. Men have dreamed and even written down utopias from ancient times; but such utopias were at first typically allegories rather than projections: nonexistent models against which to measure the real world, exploitations of the impossible (as the traditional name declares) rather than explorations or anticipations or programs of the possible. And, in any event, only recently have such works occupied a position anywhere near the center of literature.

Indeed, the movement of futurist literature from the periphery to the center of culture provides a clue to certain essential meanings of our times and of the art which best reflects it. If we make a brief excursion from the lofty reaches of High Art to the humbler levels of Pop Culture—where radical transformations in literature are reflected in simplified form—the extent and nature of the futurist revolution will become immediately evident. Certainly, we have seen in recent years the purveyors of Pop Culture transfer their energies from the Western and the Dracula-type thriller (last heirs of the Romantic and Gothic concern with the past) to the Detective Story especially in its hard-boiled form (final vulgarization of the realists' dedication to the present) to Science Fiction (a new genre based on hints in E. A. Poe and committed to "extrapolating" the future). This development is based in part on the tendency to rapid exhaustion inherent in popular forms; but in part reflects a growing sense of the irrelevance of the past and even of the present to 1965. Surely, there has never been a moment in which the most naïve as well as the most sophisticated have been so acutely aware of how the past threatens momentarily to disappear from the present, which itself seems on the verge of disappearing into the future.

And this awareness functions, therefore, on the level of art as well as entertainment, persuading quite serious writers to emulate the modes of Science Fiction. The novel is most amenable to this sort of adaptation, whose traces we can find in writers as various as William Golding and Anthony Burgess, William Burroughs and Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., Harry Matthews and John Barth—to all of whom young readers tend to respond with a sympathy they do not feel even

toward such forerunners of the mode (still more allegorical than prophetic) as Aldous Huxley, H. G. Wells and George Orwell. But the influence of Science Fiction can be discerned in poetry as well, and even in the polemical essays of such polymath prophets as Wilhelm Reich, Buckminster Fuller, Marshall McLuhan, perhaps also Norman O. Brown. Indeed, in Fuller the prophetic-Science-Fiction view of man is always at the point of fragmenting into verse:

*men are known as being six feet tall
because that is their tactile limit;
they are not known by how far we can hear them,
e.g., as a one-half mile man
and only to dogs are men known
by their gigantic olfactoral dimensions. . . .*

I am not now interested in analyzing, however, the diction and imagery which have passed from Science Fiction into post-Modernist literature, but rather in coming to terms with the prophetic content common to both: with the myth rather than the modes of Science Fiction. But that myth is quite simply the myth of the end of man, of the transcendence or transformation of the human—a vision quite different from that of the extinction of our species by the Bomb, which seems stereotype rather than archetype and consequently the source of editorials rather than poems. More fruitful artistically is the prospect of the radical transformation (under the impact of advanced technology and the transfer of traditional human functions to machines) of *homo sapiens* into something else: the emergence—to use the language of Science Fiction itself—of “mutants” among us.

A simpleminded prevision of this event is to be found in Arthur C. Clarke’s *Childhood’s End*, at the conclusion of which the mutated offspring of parents much like us are about to take off under their own power into outer space. Mr. Clarke believes that he is talking about a time still to come because he takes metaphor for fact; though simply translating “outer space” into “inner space” reveals to us that what he is up to is less prediction than description; since the post-human future is now, and if not we, at least our children, are what it would be comfortable to pretend we still only foresee. But what, in fact, are they: these mutants who are likely to sit before us in class, or across from us at the dinner table, or who stare at us with hostility from street corners as we pass?

Beatniks or hipsters, layabouts and drop-outs we are likely to call them with corresponding hostility—or more elegantly, but still without sympathy, passive onlookers, abstentionists, spiritual cata-tonics. There resides in all of these terms an element of truth, at least about the relationship of the young to what we have defined as the tradition, the world we have made for them; and if we turn to the books in which they see their own destiny best represented (*The Clockwork Orange*, say, or *On the Road* or *Temple of Gold*), we will find nothing to contradict that truth. Nor will we find anything to expand it, since the young and their laureates avoid on principle the kind of definition (even of themselves) for which we necessarily seek.

Let us begin then with the negative definition our own hostility suggests, since this is all that is available to us, and say that the “mutants” in our midst are non-participants in the past (though our wisdom assures us this is impossible), drop-outs from history. The withdrawal from school, so typical of their generation and so inscrutable to ours, is best understood as a lived symbol of their rejection of the notion of cultural continuity and progress, which our graded educational system represents in institutional form. It is not merely a matter of their rejecting what happens to have happened just before them, as the young do, after all, in every age; but of their attempting to disavow the very idea of the past, of their seeking to avoid recapitulating it step by step—up to the point of graduation into the present.

Specifically, the tradition from which they strive to disengage is the tradition of the human, as the West (understanding the West to extend from the United States to Russia) has defined it, Humanism itself, both in its bourgeois and Marxist forms; and more especially, the cult of reason—that dream of Socrates, redreamed by the Renaissance and surviving all travesties down to only yesterday. To be sure, there have long been anti-rational forces at work in the West, including primitive Christianity itself; but the very notion of literary culture is a product of Humanism, as the early Christians knew (setting fire to libraries), so that the Church in order to sponsor poets had first to come to terms with reason itself by way of Aquinas and Aristotle.

Only with Dada was the notion of an anti-rational anti-litera-

ture born; and Dada became Surrealism, i.e., submitted to the influence of those last neo-Humanists, those desperate Socratic Cabalists, Freud and Marx—dedicated respectively to contriving a rationale of violence and a rationale of impulse. The new irrationalists, however, deny all the apostles of reason, Freud as well as Socrates; and if they seem to exempt Marx, this is because they know less about him, have heard him evoked less often by the teachers they are driven to deny. Not only do they reject the Socratic adage that the unexamined life is not worth living, since for them precisely the unexamined life is the only one worth enduring at all. But they also abjure the Freudian one: “Where id was, ego shall be,” since for them the true rallying cry is, “Let id prevail over ego, impulse over order,” or—in negative terms—“Freud is a fink!”

The first time I heard this irreverent charge from the mouth of a student some five or six years ago (I who had grown up thinking of Freud as a revolutionary, a pioneer), I knew that I was already in the future; though I did not yet suspect that there would be no room in that future for the university system to which I had devoted my life. Kerouac might have told me so, or Ginsberg, or even so polite and genteel a spokesman for youth as J. D. Salinger, but I was too aware of what was wrong with such writers (their faults more readily apparent to my taste than their virtues) to be sensitive to the truths they told. It took, therefore, certain public events to illuminate (for me) the literature which might have illuminated them.

I am thinking, of course, of the recent demonstrations at Berkeley and elsewhere, whose ostensible causes were civil rights or freedom of speech or Vietnam, but whose not so secret slogan was all the time: *The Professor is a Fink!* And what an array of bad anti-academic novels, I cannot help reminding myself, written by disgruntled professors, created the mythology out of which that slogan grew. Each generation of students is invented by the generation of teachers just before them; but how different they are in dream and fact—as different as self-hatred and its reflection in another. How different the professors in Jeremy Larner’s *Drive, He Said* from those even in Randall Jarrell’s *Pictures from an Institution* or Mary McCarthy’s *Groves of Academe*.

To be sure, many motives operated to set the students in action, some of them imagined in no book, however good or bad. Many of

the thousands who resisted or shouted on campuses did so in the name of naïve or disingenuous or even nostalgic politics (be careful what you wish for in your middle age, or your children will parody it forthwith!); and sheer ennui doubtless played a role along with a justified rage against the hypocrisies of academic life. Universities have long rivaled the churches in their devotion to institutionalizing hypocrisy; and more recently they have outstripped television itself (which most professors affect to despise even more than they despise organized religion) in the institutionalization of boredom.

But what the students were protesting in large part, I have come to believe, was the very notion of man which the universities sought to impose upon them: that bourgeois-Protestant version of Humanism, with its view of man as justified by rationality, work, duty, vocation, maturity, success; and its concomitant understanding of childhood and adolescence as a temporarily privileged time of preparation for assuming those burdens. The new irrationalists, however, are prepared to advocate prolonging adolescence to the grave, and are ready to dispense with school as an outlived excuse for leisure. To them work is as obsolete as reason, a vestige (already dispensable for large numbers) of an economically marginal, pre-automated world; and the obsolescence of the two adds up to the obsolescence of everything our society understands by maturity.

Nor is it in the name of an older more valid Humanistic view of man that the new irrationalists would reject the WASP version; Rabelais is as alien to them as Benjamin Franklin. Disinterested scholarship, reflection, the life of reason, a respect for tradition stir (however dimly and confusedly) chiefly their contempt; and the Abbey of Thelme would seem as sterile to them as Robinson Crusoe's Island. To the classroom, the library, the laboratory, the office conference and the meeting of scholars, they prefer the demonstration, the sit-in, the riot: the mindless unity of an impassioned crowd (with guitars beating out the rhythm in the background), whose immediate cause is felt rather than thought out, whose ultimate cause is itself. In light of this, the Teach-in, often ill understood because of an emphasis on its declared political ends, can be seen as implicitly a parody and mockery of the real classroom: related to the actual business of the university, to real teaching only as the Demonstration Trial (of Dimi-

trov, of the Soviet Doctors, of Eichmann) to real justice or Demonstration Voting (for one party or a token two) to real suffrage.

At least, since Berkeley (or perhaps since Martin Luther King provided students with new paradigms for action) the choice has been extended beyond what the earlier laureates of the new youth could imagine in the novel: the nervous breakdown at home rather than the return to "sanity" and school, which was the best Salinger could invent for Franny and Holden; or Kerouac's way out for his "saintly" vagrants, that "road" from nowhere to noplac with homemade gurus at the way stations. The structure of those fictional vaudevilles between hard covers that currently please the young (*Catch 22*, *V.*, *A Mother's Kisses*), suggest in their brutality and discontinuity, their politics of mockery something of the spirit of the student demonstrations; but only Jeremy Lerner, as far as I know, has dealt explicitly with the abandonment of the classroom in favor of the dionysiac pack, the turning from *polis* to *thiasos*, from forms of social organization traditionally thought of as male to the sort of passionate community attributed by the ancients to females out of control.

Conventional slogans in favor of "Good Works" (pious emendations of existing social structures, or extensions of accepted "rights" to excluded groups) though they provide the motive power of such protests are irrelevant to their form and their final significance. They become their essential selves, i.e., genuine new forms of rebellion, when the demonstrators hoist (as they did in the final stages of the Berkeley protests) the sort of slogan which embarrasses not only fellow-travelers but even the bureaucrats who direct the initial stages of the revolt: at the University of California, the single four-letter word no family newspaper would reprint, though no member of a family who could read was likely not to know it.

It is possible to argue on the basis of the political facts themselves that the word "fuck" entered the whole scene accidentally (there were only four students behind the "Dirty Speech Movement," only fifteen hundred kids could be persuaded to demonstrate for it, etc., etc.). But the prophetic literature which anticipates the movement indicates otherwise, suggesting that the logic of their illogical course eventually sets the young against language itself, against the very counters of logical discourse. They seek an anti-language of protest as inevitably as they seek anti-poems and anti-novels, end with the ulti-

mate anti-word, which the demonstrators at Berkeley disingenuously claimed stood for FREEDOM UNDER CLARK KERR.

Esthetics, however, had already anticipated politics in this regard; porno-poetry preceding and preparing the way for what Lewis Feuer has aptly called porno-politics. Already in 1963, in an essay entitled "*Phi Upsilon Kappa*," the young poet Michael McClure was writing: "Gregory Corso has asked me to join with him in a project to free the word FUCK from its chains and strictures. I leap to make some new freedom. . . ." And McClure's own "Fuck Ode" is a product of this collaboration, as the very name of Ed Saunders' journal, *Fuck You*, is the creation of an analogous impulse. The aging critics of the young who have dealt with the Berkeley demonstrations in such journals as *Commentary* and the *New Leader* do not, however, read either Saunders' porno-pacifist magazine or *Kulchur*, in which McClure's manifesto was first printed—the age barrier separating readership in the United States more effectively than class, political affiliation or anything else.

Their sense of porno-esthetics is likely to come from deserters from their own camp, chiefly Norman Mailer, and especially his recent *An American Dream*, which represents the entry of anti-language (extending the tentative explorations of "The Time of Her Time") into the world of the middle-aged, both on the level of mass culture and that of yesterday's ex-Marxist, post-Freudian avant-garde. Characteristically enough, Mailer's book has occasioned in the latter quarters reviews as irrelevant, incoherent, misleading and fundamentally scared as the most philistine responses to the Berkeley demonstrations, Philip Rahv and Stanley Edgar Hyman providing two egregious examples. Yet elsewhere (in sectors held by those more at ease with their own conservatism, i.e., without defunct radicalisms to uphold) the most obscene forays of the young are being met with a disheartening kind of tolerance and even an attempt to adapt them to the conditions of commodity art.

But precisely here, of course, a disconcerting irony is involved; for after a while, there will be no Rahvs and Hymans left to shock—anti-language becoming mere language with repeated use and in the face of acceptance; so that all sense of exhilaration will be lost along with the possibility of offense. What to do then except to choose silence, since raising the ante of violence is ultimately self-defeating; and the

way of obscenity in any case leads as naturally to silence as to further excess? Moreover, to the talkative heirs of Socrates, silence is the one offense that never wears out, the radicalism that can never become fashionable; which is why, after the obscene slogan has been hauled down, a blank placard is raised in its place.

There are difficulties, to be sure, when one attempts to move from the politics of silence to an analogous sort of poetry. The opposite number to the silent picketer would be the silent poet, which is a contradiction in terms; yet there are these days non-singers of (perhaps) great talent who shrug off the temptation to song with the muttered comment, "Creativity is out." Some, however, make literature of a kind precisely at the point of maximum tension between the tug toward silence and the pull toward publication. Music is a better language really for saying what one would prefer not to say at all—and all the way from certain sorts of sufficiently cool jazz to Rock'n'Roll (with its minimal lyrics that defy understanding on a first hearing), music is the preferred art of the irrationalists.

But some varieties of skinny poetry seem apt, too (as practised, say, by Robert Creeley after the example of W. C. Williams), since their lines are three parts silence to one part speech:

*My lady
fair with
soft
arms, what
can I say to
you— words, words . . .*

And, of course, fiction aspiring to become Pop Art, say, *An American Dream* (with the experiments of Hemingway and Nathanael West behind it), works approximately as well, since clichés are almost as inaudible as silence itself. The point is not to shout, not to insist, but to hang cool, to baffle all mothers, cultural and spiritual as well as actual.

When the Town Council in Venice, California was about to close down a particularly notorious beatnik cafe, a lady asked to testify before them, presumably to clinch the case against the offenders. What she reported, however, was that each day as she walked by the cafe and looked in its windows, she saw the unsavory types who inhabited it "just standing there, looking—nonchalant." And, in a way,

her improbable adjective does describe a crime against her world; for non-chaleur ("cool", the futurists themselves would prefer to call it) is the essence of their life-style as well as of the literary styles to which they respond: the offensive style of those who are not so much *for* anything in particular, as "with it" in general.

But such an attitude is as remote from traditional "alienation," with its profound longing to end disconnection, as it is from ordinary forms of allegiance, with their desperate resolve not to admit disconnection. The new young celebrate disconnection—accept it as one of the necessary consequences of the industrial system which has delivered them from work and duty, of that welfare state which makes disengagement the last possible virtue, whether it call itself Capitalist, Socialist or Communist. "Detachment" is the traditional name for the stance the futurists assume; but "detachment" carries with it irrelevant religious, even specifically Christian overtones. The post-modernists are surely in some sense "mystics," religious at least in a way they do not ordinarily know how to confess, but they are not Christians.

Indeed, they regard Christianity, quite as the Black Muslim (with whom they have certain affinities) do, as a white ideology: merely one more method—along with Humanism, technology, Marxism—of imposing "White" or Western values on the colored rest of the world. To the new barbarian, however, that would-be post-Humanist (who is in most cases the white offspring of Christian forebears) his whiteness is likely to seem if not a stigma and symbol of shame, at least the outward sign of his exclusion from all that his Christian Humanist ancestors rejected in themselves and projected mythologically upon the colored man. For such reasons, his religion, when it becomes explicit, claims to be derived from Tibet or Japan or the ceremonies of the Plains Indians, or is composed out of the non-Christian sub-mythology that has grown up among Negro jazz musicians and in the civil rights movement. When the new barbarian speaks of "soul," for instance, he means not "soul" as in Heaven, but as in "soul music" or even "soul food."

It is all part of the attempt of the generation under twenty-five, not exclusively in its most sensitive members but especially in them, to become Negro, even as they attempt to become poor or pre-rational. About this particular form of psychic assimilation I have written sufficiently in the past (summing up what I had been long saying in

chapters seven and eight of *Waiting for the End*), neglecting only the sense in which what starts as a specifically American movement becomes an international one, spreading to the *yé-yé* girls of France or the working-class entertainers of Liverpool with astonishing swiftness and ease.

What interests me more particularly right now is a parallel assimilationist attempt, which may, indeed, be more parochial and is certainly most marked at the moment in the Anglo-Saxon world, i.e., in those cultural communities most totally committed to bourgeois-Protestant values and surest that they are unequivocally "white." I am thinking of the effort of young men in England and the United States to assimilate into themselves (or even to assimilate themselves into) that otherness, that sum total of rejected psychic elements which the middle-class heirs of the Renaissance have identified with "woman." To become new men, these children of the future seem to feel, they must not only become more Black than White but more female than male. And it is natural that the need to make such an adjustment be felt with especial acuteness in post-Protestant highly industrialized societies, where the functions regarded as specifically male for some three hundred years tend most rapidly to become obsolete.

Surely, in America, machines already perform better than humans a large number of those aggressive-productive activities which our ancestors considered man's special province, even his *raison d'être*. Not only has the male's prerogative of making things and money (which is to say, of working) been preempted, but also his time-honored privilege of dealing out death by hand, which until quite recently was regarded as a supreme mark of masculine valor. While it seems theoretically possible, even in the heart of Anglo-Saxondom, to imagine a leisurely, pacific male, in fact the losses in secondary functions sustained by men appear to have shaken their faith in their primary masculine function as well, in their ability to achieve the conquest (as the traditional metaphor has it) of women. Earlier, advances in technology had detached the wooing and winning of women from the begetting of children; and though the invention of the condom had at least left the decision to inhibit fatherhood in the power of males, its replacement by the "loop" and the "pill" has placed paternity at the mercy of the whims of women.

Writers of fiction and verse registered the technological obso-

lescence of masculinity long before it was felt even by the representative minority who give to the present younger generation its character and significance. And literary critics have talked a good deal during the past couple of decades about the conversion of the literary hero into the non-hero or the anti-hero; but they have in general failed to notice his simultaneous conversion into the non- or anti-male. Yet ever since Hemingway at least, certain male protagonists of American literature have not only fled rather than sought out combat but have also fled rather than sought out women. From Jake Barnes to Holden Caulfield they have continued to run from the threat of female sexuality; and, indeed, there are models for such evasion in our classic books, where heroes still eager for the fight (Natty Bumppo comes to mind) are already shy of wives and sweethearts and mothers.

It is not absolutely required that the anti-male anti-hero be impotent or homosexual or both (though this helps, as we remember remembering Walt Whitman), merely that he be more seduced than seducing, more passive than active. Consider, for instance, the oddly "womanish" Herzog of Bellow's current best seller, that Jewish Emma Bovary with a Ph.D., whose chief flaw is physical vanity and a taste for fancy clothes. Bellow, however, is more interested in summing up the past than in evoking the future; and *Herzog* therefore seems an end rather than a beginning, the product of nostalgia (remember when there were real Jews once, and the "Jewish Novel" had not yet been discovered!) rather than prophecy. No, the post-humanist, post-male, post-white, post-heroic world is a post-Jewish world by the same token, anti-Semitism as inextricably woven into it as into the movement for Negro rights; and its scriptural books are necessarily *goyish*, not least of all William Burroughs' *The Naked Lunch*.

Burroughs is the chief prophet of the post-male post-heroic world; and it is his emulators who move into the center of the relevant literary scene, for *The Naked Lunch* (the later novels are less successful, less exciting but relevant still) is more than it seems: no mere essay in heroin-hallucinated homosexual pornography—but a nightmare anticipation (in Science Fiction form) of post-Humanist sexuality. Here, as in Alexander Trocchi, John Rechy, Harry Matthews (even an occasional Jew like Allen Ginsberg, who has begun by inscribing properly anti-Jewish obscenities on the walls of the world), are clues to the new attitudes toward sex that will continue to inform

our improbable novels of passion and our even more improbable love songs.

The young to whom I have been referring, the mythologically representative minority (who, by a process that infuriates the mythologically inert majority out of which they come, "stand for" their times), live in a community in which what used to be called the "Sexual Revolution," the Freudian-Laurentian revolt of their grandparents and parents, has triumphed as imperfectly and unsatisfactorily as all revolutions always triumph. They confront, therefore, the necessity of determining not only what meanings "love" can have in their new world, but—even more disturbingly—what significance, if any, "male" and "female" now possess. For a while, they (or at least their literary spokesmen recruited from the generation just before them) seemed content to celebrate a kind of *reductio* or *exaltatio ad absurdum* of their parents' once revolutionary sexual goals: The Reichian-inspired Cult of the Orgasm.

Young men and women eager to be delivered of traditional ideologies of love find especially congenial the belief that not union or relationship (much less offspring) but physical release is the end of the sexual act; and that, therefore, it is a matter of indifference with whom or by what method ones pursues the therapeutic climax, so long as that climax is total and repeated frequently. And Wilhelm Reich happily detaches this belief from the vestiges of Freudian rationalism, setting it instead in a context of Science Fiction and witchcraft; but his emphasis upon "full genitality," upon growing up and away from infantile pleasures, strikes the young as a disguised plea for the "maturity" they have learned to despise. In a time when the duties associated with adulthood promise to become irrelevant, there seems little reason for denying oneself the joys of babyhood—even if these are associated with such regressive fantasies as escaping it all in the arms of little sister (in the Gospel according to J. D. Salinger) or flirting with the possibility of getting into bed with papa (in the Gospel according to Norman Mailer).

Only Norman O. Brown in *Life Against Death* has come to terms on the level of theory with the aspiration to take the final evolutionary leap and cast off adulthood completely, at least in the area of sex. His post-Freudian program for pan-sexual, non-orgasmic love rejects "full genitality" in favor of a species of indiscriminate

male with the blood of Cavaliers in his veins—has served as a model. And what else is left to young men, in any case, after the devaluation of the grim duties they had arrogated to themselves in place of the pursuit of loveliness?

All of us who are middle-aged and were Marxists, which is to say, who once numbered ourselves among the last assured Puritans, have surely noticed in ourselves a vestigial roundhead rage at the new hair styles of the advanced or—if you please—delinquent young. Watching young men titivate their locks (the comb, the pocket mirror and the bobby pin having repaced the jackknife, catcher's mitt and brass knuckles), we feel the same baffled resentment that stirs in us when we realize that they have rejected work. A job and unequivocal maleness—these are two sides of the same Calvinist coin, which in the future buys nothing.

Few of us, however, have really understood how the Beatle hair-do is part of a syndrome, of which high heels, jeans tight over the buttocks, etc., are other aspects, symptomatic of a larger retreat from masculine aggressiveness to female allure—in literature and the arts to the style called “camp.” And fewer still have realized how that style, though the invention of homosexuals, is now the possession of basically heterosexual males as well, a strategy in their campaign to establish a new relationship not only with women but with their own masculinity. In the course of that campaign, they have embraced certain kinds of gesture and garb, certain accents and tones traditionally associated with females or female impersonators; which is why we have been observing recently (in life as well as fiction and verse) young boys, quite unequivocally male, playing all the traditional roles of women: the vamp, the coquette, the whore, the icy tease, the pure young virgin.

Not only oldsters, who had envisioned and despaired of quite another future, are bewildered by this turn of events, but young girls, too, seem scarcely to know what is happening—looking on with that new, schizoid stare which itself has become a hallmark of our times. And the crop-headed jocks, those crew-cut athletes who represent an obsolescent masculine style based on quite other values, have tended to strike back blindly; beating the hell out of some poor kid whose hair is too long or whose pants are too tight—quite as they once beat up young Communists for revealing that their politics had become

obsolete. Even heterosexual writers, however, have been slow to catch up, the revolution in sensibility running ahead of that in expression; and they have perforce permitted homosexuals to speak for them (Burroughs and Genet and Baldwin and Ginsberg and Albee and a score of others), even to invent the forms in which the future will have to speak.

The revolt against masculinity is not limited, however, to simple matters of coiffure and costume, visible even to athletes; or to the adaptation of certain campy styles and modes to new uses. There is also a sense in which two large social movements that have set the young in motion and furnished images of action for their books—movements as important in their own right as porno-politics and the pursuit of the polymorphous perverse—are connected analogically to the abdication from traditional maleness. The first of these is non-violent or passive resistance, so oddly come back to the land of its inventor, that icy Thoreau who dreamed a love which “. . . has not much human blood in it, but consists with a certain disregard for men and their erections. . . .”

The civil rights movement, however, in which nonviolence has found a home, has been hospitable not only to the sort of post-humanist I have been describing; so that at a demonstration (Selma, Alabama will do as an example) the true hippie will be found side by side with backwoods Baptists, nuns on a spiritual spree, boy bureaucrats practicing to take power, resurrected socialists, Unitarians in search of a God, and just plain tourists, gathered, as once at the Battle of Bull Run, to see the fun. For each of these, nonviolence will have a different sort of fundamental meaning—as a tactic, a camouflage, a passing fad, a pious gesture—but for each in part, and for the post-humanist especially, it will signify the possibility of heroism without aggression, effective action without guilt.

There have always been two contradictory American ideals: to be the occasion of maximum violence, and to remain absolutely innocent. Once, however, these were thought hopelessly incompatible for males (except, perhaps, as embodied in works of art), reserved strictly for women: the spouse of the wife-beater, for instance, or the victim of rape. But males have now assumed these classic roles; and just as a particularly beleaguered wife occasionally slipped over the dividing

line into violence, so do the new passive protestors—leaving us to confront (or resign to the courts) such homey female questions as: *Did Mario Savio really bite that cop in the leg as he sagged limply toward the ground?*

The second social movement is the drug cult, more widespread among youth, from its squarest limits to its most beat, than anyone seems prepared to admit in public; and at its beat limit at least inextricably involved with the civil rights movement, as the recent arrests of Peter DeLissovoy and Susan Ryerson revealed even to the ordinary newspaper reader. "Police said that most of the recipients [of marijuana] were college students," the U.P. story runs. "They quoted Miss Ryerson and DeLissovoy as saying that many of the letter packets were sent to civil rights workers." Only fiction and verse, however, has dealt with the conjunction of homosexuality, drugs and civil rights, eschewing the general piety of the press which has been unwilling to compromise "good works" on behalf of the Negro by associating it with the deep radicalism of a way of life based on the ritual consumption of "pot."

The widespread use of such hallucinogens as peyote, marijuana, the "mexican mushroom," LSD, etc., as well as pep pills, goof balls, airplane glue, certain kinds of cough syrups and even, though in many fewer cases, heroin, is not merely a matter of a changing taste in stimulants but of the programmatic espousal of an anti-puritanical mode of existence—hedonistic and detached—one more strategy in the war on time and work. But it is also (to pursue my analogy once more) an attempt to arrogate to the male certain traditional privileges of the female. What could be more womanly, as Elémire Zolla was already pointing out some years ago, than permitting the penetration of the body by a foreign object which not only stirs delight but even (possibly) creates new life?

In any case, with drugs we have come to the crux of the futurist revolt, the hinge of everything else, as the young tell us over and over in their writing. When the movement was first finding a voice, Allen Ginsberg set this aspect of it in proper context in an immensely comic, utterly serious poem called "America," in which "pot" is associated with earlier forms of rebellion, a commitment to catatonia, and a rejection of conventional male potency:

*America I used to be a communist when I was a kid I'm not
sorry.
I smoke marijuana every chance I get.
I sit in my house for days on end and stare at the roses in the
closet.
When I go to Chinatown I . . . never get laid . . .*

Similarly, Michael McClure reveals in his essay, "*Phi Upsilon Kappa*," that before penetrating the "cavern of Anglo-Saxon," whence he emerged with the slogan of the ultimate Berkeley demonstrators, he had been on mescaline. "I have emerged from a dark night of the soul; I entered it by Peyote." And by now, drug-taking has become as standard a feature of the literature of the young as oral-genital love-making. I flip open the first issue of yet another ephemeral San Francisco little magazine quite at random and read: "I tie up and the main pipe [the ante-cobital vein, for the clinically inclined] swells like a prideful beggar beneath the skin. Just before I get on it is always the worst." Worse than the experience, however, is its literary rendering; and the badness of such confessional fiction, flawed by the sentimentality of those who desire to live "like a cunning vegetable," is a badness we older readers find it only too easy to perceive, as our sons and daughters find it only too easy to overlook. Yet precisely here the age and the mode define themselves; for not in the master but in the hacks new forms are established, new lines drawn.

Here, at any rate, is where the young lose us in literature as well as life, since here they pass over into real revolt, i.e., what we really cannot abide, hard as we try. The mother who has sent her son to private schools and on to Harvard to keep him out of classrooms overcrowded with poor Negroes, rejoices when he sets out for Mississippi with his comrades in SNCC, but shudders when he turns on with LSD; just as the ex-Marxist father, who has earlier proved radicalism impossible, rejoices to see his son stand up, piously and pompously, for CORE or SDS, but trembles to hear him quote Alpert and Leary or praise Burroughs. Just as certainly as liberalism is the LSD of the aging, LSD is the radicalism of the young.

If whiskey long served as an appropriate symbolic excess for those who chafed against Puritan restraint without finally challenging it—temporarily releasing them to socially harmful aggression and (hopefully) sexual self-indulgence, the new popular drugs provide

an excess quite as satisfactorily symbolic to the post-Puritans—releasing them from sanity to madness by destroying in them the inner restrictive order which has somehow survived the dissolution of the outer. It is finally insanity, then, that the futurists learn to admire and emulate, quite as they learn to pursue vision instead of learning, hallucination rather than logic. The schizophrenic replaces the sage as their ideal, their new culture hero, figured forth as a giant schizoid Indian (his madness modeled in part on the author's own experiences with LSD) in Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*.

The hippier young are not alone, however, in their taste for the insane; we live in a time when readers in general respond sympathetically to madness in literature wherever it is found, in established writers as well as in those trying to establish new modes. Surely it is not the lucidity and logic of Robert Lowell or Theodore Roethke or John Berryman which we admire, but their flirtation with incoherence and disorder. And certainly it is Mailer at his most nearly psychotic, Mailer the creature rather than the master of his fantasies who moves us to admiration; while in the case of Saul Bellow, we endure the theoretical optimism and acceptance for the sake of the delightful melancholia, the fertile paranoia which he cannot disavow any more than the talent at whose root they lie. Even essayists and analysts recommend themselves to us these days by a certain redemptive nuttiness; at any rate, we do not love, say, Marshall McLuhan less because he continually risks sounding like the body-fluids man in *Dr. Strangelove*.

We have, moreover, recently been witnessing the development of a new form of social psychiatry² (a psychiatry of the future already anticipated by the literature of the future) which considers some varieties of "schizophrenia" not diseases to be cured but forays into an unknown psychic world: random penetrations by bewildered internal cosmonauts of a realm that it will be the task of the next generations to explore. And if the accounts which the returning schizophrenics give (the argument of the apologists runs) of the "places" they have been are fantastic and garbled, surely they are no more so than, for example, Columbus' reports of the world he had claimed for Spain,

² Described in an article in the *New Left Review* of November-December, 1964, by R. D. Laing who advocates "ex-patients helping future patients go mad."

a world bounded—according to his newly drawn maps—by Cathay on the north and Paradise on the south.

In any case, poets and junkies have been suggesting to us that the new world appropriate to the new men of the latter twentieth century is to be discovered only by the conquest of inner space: by an adventure of the spirit, an extension of psychic possibility, of which the flights into outer space—moonshots and expeditions to Mars—are precisely such unwitting metaphors and analogues as the voyages of exploration were of the earlier breakthrough into the Renaissance, from whose consequences the young seek now so desperately to escape. The laureate of that new conquest is William Burroughs; and it is fitting that the final word be his:

"This war will be won in the air. In the Silent Air with Image Rays. You were a pilot remember? Tracer bullets cutting the right wing you were free in space a few seconds before in blue space between eyes. Go back to Silence. Keep Silence. Keep Silence. K.S. K.S. . . . From Silence re-write the message that is you. You are the message I send to The Enemy. My Silent Message."

The Naked Astronauts were free in space. . . .

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THE NEW RADICALISM: ROUND III

Round IV of our series on the New Radicalism will appear in the Winter PR, with pieces by Norm Fruchter, Tom Hayden, Sargent Shriver and others. The discussion was opened in the Spring issue by Michael Harrington and Nat Hentoff. Different points of view will be represented in future issues.

Bayard Rustin

The “new radicalism” can be observed at two levels: as mood and as movement.

Primarily, it is a new mood and style of social action—a hostility toward the dominant economic and political institutions of the country and an impatience with the conventional efforts to transform those institutions. For many of the new radicals, the hostility and impatience grow out of naked confrontations with power forces representing the worst in American life. These confrontations are both effect and cause of the new radicalism. As embodied in direct action, they are sought after and valued in themselves as the most effective antidote to hypocrisy, which is seen as *the* crippling disease of the American cultural and social order. On the other hand, to encounter racist police, their clubs and dogs, is a searing revelation that permanently stamps one’s perception of his relationship to society. And, indeed, it is hard to argue that this raw existential experience does not reflect a significant aspect of social reality, stripped of its trappings and its verbiage of consensus.

But it is not the total reality. That understood—really understood—I have no difficulty in identifying myself with the mood. The revelation came to me years ago, and it has been reinforced with every jail sentence, with every beating, with every slander, with every betrayal. And there will be more.

As an actual social movement, the new radicalism must be sorted out. Lumping its components together under a phrase may induce a

sense of vast solidarity, but the sense is illusory; worse, it is a form of self-indulgence which radicals cannot afford.

The first component is a youthful wing of the civil rights movement whose evolution can most conveniently be traced back to the 1960 sit-ins. Here were lower-middle-class Negro college youth challenging through direct action a set of institutions (lunch counters, libraries, etc.) which directly constrained and oppressed them. These institutions, visible and close at hand, were concrete manifestations of a social order that blocked the upward mobility which this class of Negro youth and their parents had been experiencing for roughly two decades, as a consequence of the postwar prosperity and industrialization. These institutions were an affront to a new self-image based on the perception of new possibilities.

The sit-in movement was not merely a flash in the pan but helped stimulate motion in other segments of the Negro community because the institutions under attack were part and parcel of a socioeconomic order which oppressed the entire Negro community. Almost every feature of that order has come under attack. Because of the relative economic homogeneity of the Negro community, the revolt of one stratum spread rapidly to the others, and a full-scale social revolution is now in progress. It is a revolution rooted in a definable social base.

Obviously the *entire* Negro community is not actively participating in the revolution (though it has been estimated that nearly one out of every ten Negroes in the country joined the 1963 March on Washington!). Still, its extraordinarily democratic character is clear from its demands and from the massive participation it has stirred.

The demands and needs of the Negro community are articulated, however imperfectly, by the civil rights movement. But aren't the organizations comprising this movement merely bureaucratic shells, representing in membership only a stratum of the community? To some extent, sadly, this is true. Let it be noted, however, that this condition applies to *all* of the civil rights organizations—from the NAACP to SNCC. Merely to speak in the name of, and to “orient toward,” the dispossessed is not to have their proxy at the conference table or a mandate to haul them into your end of the political spectrum. Merely to talk about community organization neither achieves it nor preempts the field. The need to dig roots deep into the Negro community faces all of the civil rights organizations. The

support of that community has to be won, through hard work and ongoing programs. Its morale must be nourished by victories.

Meanwhile, the civil rights organizations in the aggregate have won the right to speak for the Negro community, and they retain that right until it is challenged or withdrawn by the community itself. Charges of "sell-out" may be hurled at will; until new organizational forms are thrown up, capable of demonstrating, concretely and not merely rhetorically, that *they* and not the established organizations are the chosen instruments of the masses, the critics remain entitled to their views, but they must be tempered with humility. They must beware of a disease peculiar to their kind: elitism.

This admonition is especially relevant to the second component of the new radicalism, which I view as a qualitatively different phenomenon from the first. It is not rooted in an oppressed class in any socioeconomic sense. It is a new intellectual class. Sociologically, its origins are in the mushrooming of higher education, in the fact that some five million youth are presently enrolled in colleges and universities, a figure to be multiplied in the years ahead. Graduate students play an important role in molding the outlook of this new class. Its members, by and large, have been reared in middle-class affluence, not grinding poverty or racial discrimination. Their motivation is moral (not material), their quest is for new values (not programs), and, perhaps above all, they seek situations and experiences which are affirmations of meaningful personal existences. This largely existential search not only explains much of the abstract anti-institutionalism of the new radicals; it also throws light on some differences between the current student movement and its counterpart of the thirties and forties. Better educated than the latter, the former is nonetheless less ideological. It is also less intellectual—in that, as Irving Howe has suggested, it is ahistorical and less discriminating. (In my view, this condition tends to arise not when the intellectual class is small and struggling to assert its distinctive role, but when it has become large enough to see itself as institutionalized and therefore generates the tensions making for disaffiliation and self-negation. The condition itself is a by-product of affluence.)

Reacting against the increasing bureaucratization and impersonalization of the campus, and rejecting the vapidness, conformity and boredom of middle-class life, the students disaffiliate from both. They come to the Negro and to the poor in search of meaning.

It would be the grossest slander to say that they go slumming. True, most of them will return to the larger society to claim the good jobs for which their educational backgrounds qualify them. No matter; they have made a noble choice, and many will benefit from it. So long as they are in the movement, the question is: are they to be taken seriously, or are they to be condescendingly patted on the head? Here I suspect some of their best friends are among their worst enemies. That is what happens when friendship becomes idolatry.

This, it strikes me, is precisely what has happened to create a third component of the new radicalism—a relative handful of writers and intellectuals who see in the Negro and student movements a potential base for their ideas. These ideas range from one-dimensional economic panaceas to new theories of protest, to world-historical notions of the rise and fall of civilizations. I do not speak of them pejoratively. Throughout history such people have played an enormously important catalytic role. One need only recall the great socialist theoreticians. But they enjoyed an advantage of which modern American radical intellectuals have been deprived by history: a socialist movement which gave their theories flesh and blood substance. Thus deprived, today's radical intellectuals are more alienated, more isolated, and more dependent for sustenance on their own theories than any similar class I can think of. Worst of all for everybody, they have not been conditioned to relate their production to the step-by-step building of a movement, to strategies and programs. This is not to say that they lack the capacity for specificity and detail; quite the contrary, they have been conditioned by the general trends in the intellectual and academic worlds toward the minutest specialization. Within their special fields they may evolve radical ideas and interpretations—*in vacuo*.

Former presidential assistant Richard Goodwin stated the problem well in a speech reported in the *Washington Post* (July 21, 1965):

In other periods of challenge and forward movement, we have had a fertile advance ground of thought towards which Government could move—from the economics of Lord Keynes to the views of Louis Brandeis. Today with the exception of a few men—men like Ken Galbraith and Michael Harrington and Paul Goodman—this is not true. Of course much is being written and said. The air is filled with the insights of sociology and psychology, political science and public administration. This

is the age of insight—often penetrating, sometimes brilliant, but . . . there is a bleak and dismal failure to relate much of this fresh understanding to the process and needs of society.

This failure stems, I contend, from the absence of anything that can seriously or precisely be called a liberal-radical *movement* in this country. Only through such a movement, and not merely through the assimilation of intellectuals into the government, can the relevance of the intellectual community be reestablished. That movement is not built by locating the most “radical” theses on some calibrated yardstick and projecting them onto masses in motion.

This is precisely the method by which some intellectuals, failing to propose meaningful, feasible next steps, perpetuate their incapsulation as a class apart. I trust I shall not be accused of anti-intellectualism when I assert that in this state they develop bad habits. Rendered inconsequential, they come to lack a sense of actual consequence. Unnourished by a political movement, they are peculiarly tempted into arrogant and elitist postures as a defense against sterility.

Michael Harrington did not invent poverty. Where, before him, were the voices of the vast majority of intellectuals? What “radical” esoteric pursuits had absorbed them? Martin Luther King did not invent segregation. Where were the intellectuals then who today cry “sell-out” and arrogate to themselves the right to tear up other people’s membership cards in “the movement”—that fragile and embryonic stirring in America which some of us have struggled to sustain for decades and whose growth and victory are even now by no means absolutely assured?

I

The above may be thought crabby or negative. I intend it to be deflationary, to help restore a sense of perspective among the components of the new radicalism, of which I consider myself a part. I want that radicalism to flourish, to broaden its base, and to approximate, at least, power. It follows that I do not want it mired in an exceedingly unoriginal existential subjectivism, or addicted to strategy by temperament. For it is literally true that the aspirations of millions of people, a good number of them black, will be profoundly affected by what we build—or fail to build—now. Our strategy must be based,

first of all, on a recognition of who we are and where we are today.

It is easy to get caught up in semantics. In the spring PR Nat Hentoff speaks of the new radicalism as “a political and economic movement.”¹ That we can even speak of the phenomenon as a *movement* shows how far we have come from thinking seriously about power. One may speak of the trade unions as an economic (and political) movement, because here are discernible millions of people organized behind a more or less specific program. On the local union level that program consists of demands relating to wages and working conditions—demands which, when won, lift in a thousand ways the daily lives and dreams of working people. On the national level, the AFL-CIO has a definable program for reforming the national economy in the direction of full employment, social security, better schools and the rest. This program is surely inadequate to meet the conditions described by the signers of the Triple Revolution statement. It is at the same time the most advanced and rightminded program being pressed by any of the mass institutions of the country.

Now this is simply a fact, and it is difficult to participate in discussions with people who will deny facts. When Nat Hentoff writes that “labor’s demands for higher minimum wages and higher social security benefits, moreover, are *irrelevant* for those who have no jobs and no prospects of jobs” (*italics mine*), he takes us to the heart of the problem: all-or-nothingism. Because these demands are not the total cure, they are irrelevant. Well, of course they are not. At least a *part* of the unemployment problem can be cast in terms of insufficient aggregate demand, which would be increased if labor’s call for a \$2.00 minimum wage and extension of the Fair Labor Standards Act to more than five million presently uncovered workers were met. To say this is not to deny the technological revolution (except in the eyes of the monoists, variants of the all-or-nothing school); the problem is largely that the fruits of the technological revolution have been snatched by corporate interests and held back from workers and consumers (hence the lag in demand).

For reasons I have set forth elsewhere (*Commentary*, February 1965), I do not believe that the current demands of the labor movement go far enough or deep enough. But that is a far cry from saying that they are *irrelevant*. I suspect that there are millions of working

1 “The New Radicalism: Round I,” PR, Spring 1965.

poor and unemployed who would like a taste of these irrelevancies. I hope they get it, that they fight hard for it—despite the hecklings of some new radicals (especially those for whom a \$2.00 minimum wage would be a decided comedown).

Hentoff goes on to say, incredibly, “Nor do the liberals or the churches seem fully to realize not only that the War on Poverty is inadequately financed and narrow in scope, but that it cannot succeed in terms of the present definition of ‘work’ and the sacred link between the traditional definition of production and income.” If the liberals and churches do not realize (even “fully”) the inadequacy of the War on Poverty, where then is the push for an expanded program coming from? Unless, of course, Hentoff would deny that there are any forces to the left of the Johnson Administration other than the “new radicals”! To say this is clearly to deny that what he calls the “traditional package of demands of the AFL-CIO, the ADA and the rest of the liberal ‘coalition’”—namely, “such limited immediate goals are massive public works, national health insurance, a two-dollar-an-hour minimum wage”—that these are to the left of, or different from, the program of the Administration. If there is no difference, then what an embarrassment to the new radicals. For, as Hentoff also writes, “they aren’t themselves so fully utopian as not [sic] to overlook the need to gather support for such limited immediate goals. . . .” But if these immediate goals already constitute the Administration’s program, rather than a significant push from the Left, the new radicals have in fact been sucked into, are no different from, the “Establishment.” What strange conclusions follow from all-or-nothingism! Not enough that liberalism isn’t socialism (alas), it’s not even permitted to be liberalism. It is part of the oppressive Establishment, and there’s no one left to fight it but “us.” (And “us” is an ever diminishing quantity as, one by one, we fail Hentoff’s tests.)

There are some among the new radicals who have carried this mode of analysis even farther than Nat Hentoff. They see the welfare legislation of New Deal liberalism not as inadequate meliorism but as an extension of the Establishment’s bureaucratic controls over the poor and, on balance, as an evil. They speak of “corporate liberalism” as a quasi-fascism which has corrupted all of the institutions of American life. Aside from the fact that such an equation overlooks with insufferable glibness the crucial existence of political democracy

under "corporate liberalism" and its equally crucial absence under fascism, one may be permitted to ask this question: assuming that the evil has so permeated society and has accumulated so much concentrated power, what counterforce would be required to destroy it? Would it not have to be a majoritarian popular movement, consisting not simply of a stratum of students and the poor, but of Negroes, the organized labor movement, the liberal middle class and other segments of the population? Is this not a coalition of forces welded into a movement capable of exercising power *democratically*?

In the face of this need, what is the response of the new radicals? It is to define the necessary as the unattainable (which explains why the new radicals are not optimistic). Thus, Hentoff writes: "For the more radical goals, such as a guaranteed annual income and a redefinition of work, some new radicals do see the possibilities of a coalition. But not yet." Then when? When sections of the middle class are hit by the technological revolution, when the unions respond to the loss of membership caused by automation, etc. (One wonders how the new radicals, given their view of the Establishment's monolithic impregnability and the pervasive corruption, can be confident that the unions will respond at all or that the reaction of the middle class, left to itself, won't be toward fascism.) In any case, until these folks are radicalized by a deteriorating situation, there is no basis for coalition. Coalition must occur on the terms of the new radicals because "they tend to believe that to focus *all* one's energies on an illusory goal like 'full employment' or on such other transitionally important but ultimately inadequate programs as massive public works, reduced work-weeks and greatly expanded retraining programs is not to be radical enough. [The italics are Hentoff's. As if anyone is focusing *all* his energy on these goals!] But they are not especially sanguine that they can convince others in time."

Woe for the rest of us who cannot recognize revealed truth, for in the immortal words Hentoff attributes to Tom Hayden, "Bitter days will pass if ever sweet ones come to be."

I submit that this arrogance is not new. It is a distillation of the worst catastrophist varieties of sectarian leftism, and its resurrection in the sixties leaves one speechless.

In the name of precisely what new radical program do the new radicals abjure coalition for now?

First, there is the recognition that, in U Thant's words, "the fundamental revolutionary change" is that the developed countries "can have—in anything but the shortest run—the kind and scale of resources they decide to have. . . ." Very good, although why Hentoff has to refer to U Thant for an idea Mike Harrington has long been expounding (and which his new book treats at length) leaves me puzzled. Then there is Ben Seligman's point about structural unemployment, taken from that "tired radical" magazine *Dissent* (edited by that "tired radical" Irving Howe). Then there is the observation by Wilhelm and Powell about the Negro being the weather vane of the future, a notion I seem to recall having expatiated on occasion and about which Hentoff kindly quoted me at length in his *The New Equality* (written a year or so before I too became an ex-radical).

Then there is Robert Theobald's proposal for a guaranteed annual income, but with the warning that given "the values permeating this society, the Theobald idea might well produce a future similar in its bland essentials to that described by Ellul" [viz., a dehumanized, entirely paternalistic welfare society]. Thus we need a change in societal values. A first step is a "revision of the way we educate teachers," along the lines of Goodman, Bruner and Friedenberg. (Are they part of the new radicalism; to what extent have their writings been studied or rendered programmatic by the new radicalism?)

But the new education requires a redefinition of work, and for the redefinition Hentoff again turns to Tom Hayden for a paragraph which Hayden would never claim to be original with him. Every idea in it comes from Frank Riessman (even before his *New Careers for the Poor*) and his colleagues. Never mind; Hayden favors a society which "subsidize[s] community-level art and journalism, health clinics, recreational facilities, libraries and museums. . . ." Lest we be transported by enthusiasm, however, Hentoff reminds us that just as the present system of values would corrupt Theobald's idea, so would it "violate Hayden's 'humanist' goals of spontaneity and self-growth through social and individual action. The experiences of Mobilization for Youth and HARYOU-ACT, among other shattered illustrations, testify to the absurdity of expecting this government to make the radicals' social revolution for them."

The last observation is well put and absolutely correct. But, then, who *will* make the radicals' social revolution? This is the central

question, the hub of my disagreements with many new radicals. It is central because only by answering it is there any hope of breaking out of the vicious circle which may seem at first to be merely a function of Hentoff's style but is really a vortex of contradictions in the basic thinking of the new radicalism.

In the absence of revolution, revolutionary *ideas* either wither or become the property of the established social order, infused with its values and turned toward its ends. The Theobald idea, for example, is not terribly dissimilar to Milton Friedman's mechanism for abolishing poverty. It *could* become a device whereby the haves buy off the have-nots, the latter being totally separated from the productive process. It *could* easily be incorporated into a *Brave New World* totalitarianism. Radicals who are optimistic about the correctness of their ideas ("... it is not too late to shape a technological society so that human capacities and spontaneity can be maximized . . .") but pessimistic about the prospects of actual change ("... they are not especially sanguine that they can convince others in time.") are therefore in a peculiar position.

Obviously, I am not proposing the fabrication of optimistic outlooks where no basis for them exists. But the insistence of the new radicals that there is no basis for a coalition now, that they are not interested in a coalition except on radical terms (even where those radical terms become nonradical in the absence of large-scale movement) is in the nature of a self-fulfilling prophecy. Eschewing coalition now, the new radicals in practice attack coalition and its proponents. They counterpose themselves to coalition and thereby to the very forces which must be set in motion if the radical ideas are to be radical, i.e., become functional. Having begun a "constant dialogue" with a bare handful of the dispossessed, some new radicals would already speak in their name; and in their name they attack as empty shells organizations which have actually organized and enjoy the adherence of millions. Hentoff cites the work of Students for a Democratic Society, most of which I find exciting. But at this writing, at least, no SDS community organizing projects can claim a steady membership of more than fifty indigenous people. Of course, these are fifty more than would have been reached if the student organizers had not moved in. But it hardly entitles them to dismiss the NAACP (with over half a million members); to charge Martin

Luther King with selling out in Selma, where he led thousands; to challenge Walter Reuther's ability to speak for hundreds of thousands of auto workers. It is perfectly legitimate for anyone to be critical of established leaderships of any kind. (I am not without some personal experience on this score.) The danger arises when one assumes that because his program is "objectively" in the interest of the masses, he in fact has the allegiance of the masses, whose "so-called" leadership is therefore discredited. From that assumption is a short leap to another: stubborn retention of their so-called leadership indicates the stupidity or incompetence of the masses. Someone else must therefore act for them. Need it be said that there is nothing new about this brand of "radicalism"?

II

It will be said that I am setting up straw men, that the new radicals—with their slogan of "participatory democracy"—are the last people among whom a tendency (and a *tendency* is all I am talking about) toward elitism can be discerned.

But let us turn to a recent article by Staughton Lynd in *Liberation* (June-July). In identifying Lynd, the magazine quotes Dow-Jones's *National Observer* that he is "the foremost intellectual in the radical left." Since the New Left is rightly incensed when its leaders are designated by outsiders, it should be recalled that Lynd was chosen to be chairman of the April 17 March on Washington to End the War in Vietnam. We may assume that this historic honor would be conferred only on someone who, to a greater rather than lesser extent, represented the thinking of the new radicals. I have many strong objections to Lynd's controversial article, but I want for now to focus on this excerpt from his final paragraph, describing the March:

Still more poignant was the perception—and I checked my reaction with many many others who felt as I did—that as the crowd moved down the Mall toward the seat of government, its path delimited on each side by rows of chartered buses so that there was nowhere to go but forward, toward the waiting policemen, it seemed that the great mass of people would simply flow on through and over the marble buildings, that our forward movement was irresistibly strong, that had some been shot or arrested nothing could have stopped that crowd from taking possession of its government. Perhaps next time we should keep going. . . .

The easiest thing is to dismiss these words as extreme revolutionary romanticism, as a fantasy growing out of the New Left's frustration with a repressive, machine-dominated, bureaucratized political order. And one may sympathize with their desire for the *ultimate* demonstration as a means of breaking through the walls of cold power with a mass of warm flesh and blood.

Indeed, has not Staughton Lynd's vision at some time or other visited every radical—especially radicals uprooted from the middle classes, powerful in their ideas but impotent in their individual alienation? Of course. But the democratic radicals have held the vision in check by raising certain questions which I fear have gone out of fashion in New Left circles, submerged under their catchall phrase "participatory democracy." One cannot escape the feeling that "participatory democracy" is being counterposed, not merely to the empty formalisms of "representative democracy" as historically evolved under American capitalism, but to the essential structural guarantees of political democracy that must prevail in any social system that would call itself democratic.

To get to the point: under whose mandate are the 20,000 Washington marchers entitled to occupy "their government" for even ten minutes? Does Lynd believe that they represented the views of anything approaching a majority of the American people on the question of Vietnam? On the contrary, the public opinion polls all revealed substantial majorities in support of Administration policies. What gives the disaffected sons and daughters of the middle class the right even symbolically to become the government?

How frustrating that the majority will not see the light and accept the wisdom (and there *is* wisdom) of the enlightened! Since they will not, the enlightened minority has one of three choices: (1) It can fight for its point of view in the hope of becoming a majority. (2) It can give up the fight and withdraw into privacy. (3) It can proclaim itself the majority and attempt to seize power.

The first course is what democratic radicals would advocate; the second we reject as complicity in present evil. As for the third, take away its romantic coatings, its existential audacity, and the personal warmth of its exponents, and you have . . . putschism. There is no more accurate way to characterize the political event inbedded in Lynd's vision than as a *coup d'état*, albeit nonviolent. Elsewhere in his

article, Lynd takes pains to distinguish between violent and nonviolent revolution. But I would submit that the problems raised by some of the current thinking in pacifist and New Left circles can best be dealt with in terms of Nonviolence and Democracy.

Militant civil rights activists have in recent times become conscious that seeds of elitism are embedded in forms of nonviolent direct action (depending, as they do, on courage, experience, willingness to endure suffering and other personal qualities more likely to be found in the dedicated few than the sympathetic many). They have recognized that this danger can be balanced or diminished only to the extent that mass action—involving large numbers of people performing a variety of tasks requiring various talents at varying levels of intensity—is encouraged and brought into existence. This recognition is largely responsible for the “Movement’s” increased emphasis on economic problems and political action.

The issue which now confronts us, and which Lynd has helped to crystallize, is: what are the structural or procedural arrangements by which the will of the rank and file is expressed; and what is the relationship between the rank and file and the leadership? Does rank and file decision-making power result merely from voluntary rejections of power by the leadership, by gestures of anonymity or abdication?—in which case the effective participation of the masses hinges on the whims or personality traits of the leaders. Or is that power guaranteed a priori by those structures, procedures and devices which, however modified to meet specific circumstances, generally go by the name of “representative democracy.”

We need to be discussing the precise nature of these guarantees—which ones are essential and indispensable to a definition of democracy and which are merely historical or accidental to a particular era, culture or system. Inescapably such a discussion must, if it is not to become scholastic, strike contrasts among existing social systems and the ideologies that justify them. It is precisely this kind of discussion which creates among too many new radicals a nervous irritation erupting in the charge of “red-baiting.”

I am trying to suggest that there is a problem of elitism on the New Left, that it is manifest in its internal life as well as in its conceptions about society at large, and that the internal and external aspects of the problem are connected. The problem cannot be defined

by any invidious labels; it is not imported from abroad. It is probably inherent in activism—which explains why activism always has to be fit into an ideological framework, and why it otherwise has no meaning except in a personal existential sense that is beyond the concern of politics and irrelevant as a guide to the outcome of social struggle.

Much more could be said on this subject, but I want to devote my remaining space to the criticisms that have been made of the coalition strategy some of us have advocated.

III

First of all, the object of coalition politics is not, as some have charged, an accommodation to “liberalism-as-usual.” It is rather an attempt to build what does not now exist in this country—a liberal-radical *movement*. There exist causes and organizations and loose forms of *ad hoc* cooperation. (Indeed, this amorphousness is one good definition of liberalism-as-usual.) But there is nothing that can be described as a political *movement*. Nor is the movement I refer to merely the pulling together of existing organizational bureaucracies, although even this would effect a positive qualitative change within those bureaucracies, with beneficial consequences for American politics. Increasing cooperation and mutual support are already in evidence among the elements of the “coalition,” one example being the statement of the national civil rights leadership in favor of repealing 14-b and the simultaneous yeoman work of the AFL-CIO on behalf of civil rights legislation. (Incidentally many new radicals, addicted to talk about the liberal “Establishment,” have no idea how recent such active cooperation is, or the extent to which it lays the basis for new departures.)

The coalition I have advocated has been confused, sometimes deliberately, with the Johnson coalition; Staughton Lynd goes so far as to accuse me of being in “coalition with the marines.” The confusion might be understandable if I and others of my persuasion had not so unequivocally spoken out in opposition to Administration policies in Vietnam and the Dominican Republic, or in criticism of the War on Poverty. But inasmuch as vocal spokesmen for the New Left find it necessary to polarize the political population into two camps—one made up of those who accept its formulations, the other made up of cold-warriors and capitulators to the Establishment—it seems neces-

sary to restate that I favor a coalition of labor, Negroes, progressive religious forces, middle-class liberals and the poor, who are not presently organized. And because the poor are unorganized, the coalition of which we speak does not yet exist, except embryonically.

It is neither fair nor helpful to describe this strategy as a coalition of leaders against the masses. We are talking about a coalition of social forces. If these forces are represented, actively or by default, through bureaucratic organizational shells, then that is a commentary on the state of political action in this country. It is not a fact that was created or peculiarly favored by the advocates of coalition, and it cannot be hung around their necks as an albatross. It is rather a part of the backdrop of American political life against which everybody works in common. Surely it is a mistake for young radicals to abandon the middle and organized working classes on *this* score and to flock instead to the poor, who have no organization, bureaucratic or otherwise.

Community organization and coalition politics are not to be counterposed. The necessary relationship between them can best be perceived by raising two questions: (1) can the poor be organized without the vigorous support of the existing coalition, and (2) once organized, will they become part of the coalition—retaining, like everyone else, their special aims and outlook—or will they be encouraged to boycott or oppose the coalition? If the coalition is constantly attacked as the *enemy*, it may be difficult to reverse this trend once the poor are mobilized to the point where they can play an effective role among the organized power forces in the society. Moreover, there is the danger that the leaders of this mobilization will have developed a vested interest in the maintenance of alienated and hostile attitudes toward the allies of the poor, in much the way some Negro ministers and businessmen oppose integration because of the threat it poses to their own base.

Community organizers who fall into this posture will of course be rendering their constituents a profound disservice. The plain fact of the matter is that the fundamental problems of the poor are not soluble on the local level but only on the level of national politics. In *The New Equality*, Nat Hentoff estimates that the cost of tearing down all the slums in New York City alone and replacing them with decent public housing comes to \$17 billion. To deal with problems

of jobs and schools, of automation and megalopolis, requires public expenditures and social planning which are realizable only through the Federal government. Aid to dependent children, unemployment compensation, welfare payments, civil liberties of the poor—all of these concrete issues around which students are attempting to organize the poor are primarily matters of national policy and legislation. Significant breakthroughs for the poor can occur only in alliance with the politically active liberal forces in the country. Once organized, will the poor not want to join with the AFL-CIO and ADA (to use Hentoff's examples) in day-to-day lobbying and mobilizing for a \$2.00 minimum wage, new housing programs, public works and other reforms? Or will they be persuaded by the breakaway scions of the middle class that their demands are trivial, that liberals are enemies, that cooperation with them means absorption into the Establishment," and that the only correct course is the cultivation of "revolutionary alienation," as one new radical spokesman puts it.

Here lies the road to defeat. Some new radicals recognize this but justify it on the grounds that only through a series of defeats and failures can the dispossessed grow in the discipline and consciousness required for ultimate victory. They are, of course, entitled to that view, although it clashes with my own, that defeat leads to demoralization and apathy. Their only obligation, it seems to me, is to inform the poor, before the event, where they expect their policies to lead.

The alternative is coalition politics, the building of a political movement based on the trade unions, Negroes, the churches, the liberal middle class and the poor. To the extent that these forces engage in national electoral political action, they are to be found overwhelmingly within the Democratic party. But they do not control that party in the sense that the victory of that party insures the implementation of their program. The reasons for this are well-known: the power of the Dixiecrat caucus and the disfranchisement of southern Negroes; the loose ideological and organizational structure of the national parties, the vestige of nineteenth-century sectional rather than class politics; under-representation of urban-liberal voting strength, etc.

These reasons are diminishing in importance. The power of the Dixiecrats has been slashed by the liberal numerical landslide of 1964 and by the registration of hundreds of thousands of southern Negroes. The political parties will increasingly reflect the urban-rural and class

conflicts of the twentieth century, especially as reapportionment proceeds. Under the pressure of these developments, it is likely that the present consensus Democratic party under Johnson will turn out to be a step on the road toward a realignment of the major parties resulting in their more nearly approximating certain Western European models. That is, one party will range from conservative to liberal, the other from liberal to radical.

Such a transformation, or modernization of our political party structure is not preordained, and I do not posit it as a matter of doctrinaire inevitability. It is a tendency, one evidence of which was the partial routing of the Dixiecrats by the MFDP of Atlantic City. Flushing the racists out of the Democratic party is a step toward making that party an instrument responsive to radical demands. It strengthens the liberals' position vis-à-vis the machines and conservative economic interests at a time when the Administration's legislative reform program will have completed its first stage and when more fundamental approaches to the nation's social and economic ills will be on the political agenda.

Assuming such a realignment does not take place, that instead the forces for change group themselves into a third party, doesn't the power of that party also rest on the coalition I have described? I sense that there is an understanding among the new radicals that the coalition will in fact be the basis for either perspective—or for any long-range political progress. They simply assume that the coalition is immortal, that they can fight it, obstruct it, assail its proponents and organize against it, but that it will be there waiting for them when they decide the time has come for joining it. The reality is that the coalition must be constantly renewed in activity; a political movement must be built consciously with an awareness of its purposes and limitations at each stage of its development.

I argue for coalition politics not because it exhausts the radical vision of society but because it exhausts the possibilities for basic change actually open to us now. Only by acting through these possibilities now do we lay the foundation for relevant radicalism. The "pessimism" of people like Nat Hentoff, leads one to wonder whether, when they say "not now," they mean "never."

Susan Sontag

ON STYLE

It would be hard to find any reputable literary critic today who would care to be caught defending *as an idea* the old antithesis of style versus content. On this issue a pious consensus prevails. Everyone is quick to avow that style and content are indissoluble, that the strongly individual style of each important writer is an organic aspect of his work and never something merely “decorative.”

In the *practice* of criticism, though, the old antithesis lives on virtually unassailed. Most of the same critics who disclaim, in passing, the notion that style is an accessory to content maintain the duality whenever they apply themselves to particular works of literature. It is not so easy, after all, to get unstuck from a distinction that practically holds together the fabric of critical discourse, and serves to perpetuate certain intellectual aims and vested interests which themselves remain unchallenged and would be difficult to surrender without a fully articulated working replacement at hand.

In fact, to talk about the style of a particular novel or poem at all as a “style” without implying, whether one wishes to or not, that style is merely decorative, accessory, is extremely hard. Merely by employing the notion one is almost bound to invoke, albeit implicitly, an antithesis between style and something else. Many critics appear not to realize this. They think themselves sufficiently protected by a theoretical disclaimer on the vulgar filtering off of style from content, all the while their judgments continue to reinforce precisely what they are, in theory, eager to deny.

One way in which the old duality lives on in the practice of criticism, in concrete judgments, is the frequency with which quite

admirable works of art are defended as good although what is mis-called their style is acknowledged to be crude or careless. Another is the frequency with which a very complex style is regarded with a barely concealed ambivalence. Contemporary writers and other artists with a style that is intricate, hermetic, demanding—not to speak of “beautiful”—get their ration of unstinting praise. Still, it is clear that such a style is often felt to be a form of insincerity—evidence of the artist’s intrusion upon his materials, which should be allowed to deliver themselves in a pure state.

Whitman, in the preface to the 1855 edition of *Leaves of Grass*, expresses the disavowal of “style” which is, in most arts since the last century, a standard ploy for ushering in a new stylistic vocabulary. “The greatest poet has less a marked style and is more the free channel of himself,” that great and very mannered poet contends. “He says to his art, I will not be meddlesome, I will not have in my writing any elegance or effect or originality to hang in the way between me and the rest like curtains. I will have nothing hang in the way, not the richest curtains. What I tell I tell for precisely what it is.”

Of course, as everyone knows or claims to know, there is no neutral, absolutely transparent style. Sartre has shown, in his excellent review of *The Stranger*, how the celebrated “white style” of Camus’ novel—impersonal, expository, lucid, flat—is itself the vehicle of Meursault’s image of the world (as made up of absurd fortuitous moments). What Roland Barthes calls “the zero degree of writing” is, precisely by being anti-metaphorical and dehumanized, as selective and artificial as any traditional style of writing. Nevertheless, the notion of a styleless transparent art is one of the most tenacious fantasies of modern culture. Artists and critics pretend to believe that it is no more possible to get the artifice out of art than it is for a person to lose his personality. Yet the aspiration lingers—a permanent dissent from modern art, with its dizzying velocity of style *changes*.

To speak of style is one way of speaking about the totality of a work of art. Like all discourse about totalities, talk of style must rely on metaphors. And metaphors mislead.

Take, for instance, Whitman’s very material metaphor. By likening style to a curtain, he has of course confused style with

decoration and for this would be speedily faulted by most critics. To conceive of style as a decorative encumbrance on the matter of the work suggests that the curtain could be parted and the matter revealed; or, to vary the metaphor slightly, that the curtain could be rendered transparent. But this is not the only erroneous implication of the metaphor. What the metaphor also suggests is that style is a matter of more or less (quantity), thick or thin (density). And, though less obviously so, this is just as wrong as the fancy that an artist possesses the genuine option to have or not to have a style. Style is not quantitative any more than it is superadded. A more complex stylistic convention—say, one taking prose farther away from the diction and cadences of ordinary speech—does not mean that the work has “more” style.

Indeed, practically all metaphors for style amount to placing matter on the inside, style on the outside. It would be more to the point to reverse the metaphor. The matter, the subject, is on the outside; the style is on the inside. As Cocteau writes: “Decorative style has never existed. Style is the soul, and unfortunately with us the soul assumes the form of the body.” Even if one were to take style as the manner of our appearing, this by no means necessarily entails an opposition between a style that one assumes and one’s “true” being. In fact, such a disjunction is extremely rare. In almost every case, our manner of appearing *is* our manner of being. The mask is the face.

I should make clear, however, that what I have been saying about dangerous metaphors doesn’t rule out the use of limited and concrete metaphors to describe the impact of a particular style. It seems harmless to speak of a style, drawing from the crude terminology used to render physical sensations, as being “loud” or “heavy” or “dull” or “tasteless” or, employing the image of an argument, as “inconsistent.”

The antipathy to “style” is always an antipathy to a given style. There are no styleless works of art, only works of art belonging to different, more or less complex stylistic traditions and conventions.

This means that the notion of style, generically considered, has a specific, historical meaning. Not only do styles belong to a time and a place; not only is it that our perception of the style

of a given work of art is always charged with an awareness of the work's historicity, its place in a chronology. Further: the visibility of styles is itself a product of historical consciousness. Were it not for departures from, or experimentation with, previous artistic norms which are known to us, we could never recognize the profile of a new style. Still further: the very notion of "style" needs to be approached historically. Awareness of style as a problematic and isolable element in a work of art has emerged in the audience for art only at certain historical moments—as a front behind which other issues, ultimately ethical and political, are being debated. Since the Renaissance, the notion of "having a style" is one of the solutions to have arisen, intermittently, to the crises that have threatened old ideas of truth, of moral rectitude and also of naturalness.

But suppose all this is admitted. That all representation is incarnated in a given style (easy to say). That there is, therefore, strictly speaking, no such thing as realism, except as, itself, a special stylistic convention (a little harder). Still, there are styles and styles. Everyone is acquainted with movements in art—two examples: Mannerist painting of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, Art Nouveau in painting, architecture, furniture and domestic objects—which do more than simply have "a style." Artists like Parmigianino, Pontormo, Rosso, Bronzino, like Gaudi, Guimard, Beardsley and Tiffany, in some obvious way cultivate style. They seem to be preoccupied with stylistic questions, and indeed to place the accent less on what they are saying than on the manner of saying it.

To deal with art of this type, which seems to demand the distinction I have been urging be abandoned, a term like "stylization" or its equivalent is needed. "Stylization" is what is present in a work of art precisely when an artist does propose the by-no-means inevitable distinction between matter and manner, theme and form. When that happens, when style and subject are so distinguished, that is, played off against each other, one can legitimately speak of subjects being treated (or mistreated) in a certain style. Creative mistreatment is more the rule. For when the material of art is conceived of as "subject matter" it is also experienced as capable of being exhausted.

And as subjects are understood to be fairly far along in this process of exhaustion, they become available to further and further stylization.

Compare, for example, certain early movies of Von Sternberg (*Salvation Hunters*, *Underworld*, *The Docks of New York*) with the six American movies he made in the thirties with Marlene Dietrich. The best of the early Von Sternberg films have pronounced stylistic features, a very sophisticated esthetic surface. But we do not feel about the narrative of the sailor and the prostitute in *The Docks of New York* as we do about the adventures of the Dietrich character in *Blonde Venus* or *The Scarlet Empress*, that it is an exercise in style. What informs these later films of Von Sternberg is an ironic attitude toward the subject matter (romantic love, the *femme fatale*), a judgment on the subject matter as interesting only insofar as it is transformed by exaggeration, in a word, stylized. . . . Cubist painting or the sculpture of Giacometti would not be examples of "stylization" as distinguished from "style" in art; however extensive the distortions of the human face and figure, these are not present to make the face and figure *interesting*. But the paintings of Crivelli and Georges de la Tour are examples of what I mean.

"Stylization" in a work of art, as distinct from style, reflects an ambivalence (affection contradicted by contempt, obsession contradicted by irony) toward the subject matter. This ambivalence is handled by maintaining, through the rhetorical overlay that is stylization, a special distance from the subject. But the common result is that the work of art is either excessively narrow and repetitive, or else the different parts seem unhinged, dissociated. (A good example of the latter is the relation between the visually brilliant denouement of Orson Welles's *The Lady from Shanghai* and the rest of the film.) No doubt, in a culture pledged to the utility (particularly the moral utility) of art, burdened with a useless need to fence off solemn art from arts which provide amusement, the eccentricities of stylized art supply a valid and valuable satisfaction. I have described these satisfactions in another essay,¹ under the name of "camp" taste. Yet, it is evident that stylized art, palpably an art of excess, lacking harmoniousness, can never be of the very greatest kind.

1 "Notes on Camp," PR, Fall 1964.

What haunts all contemporary use of the notion of style is the putative opposition between form and content. How is one to exorcise the feeling that "style," which functions like the notion of form, subverts content? One thing seems certain. No affirmation of the organic relation between style and content will really carry conviction—or guide critics who make this affirmation to the recasting of their specific discourse—until the notion of content is put in its place.

Most critics would agree that a work of art does not "contain" a certain amount of content (or function—as in the case of architecture) embellished by "style." But few address themselves to the positive consequences of what they seem to have agreed to. What is "content"? Or, more precisely, what is left of the notion of content when we have transcended the antithesis of style (or form) and content? Part of the answer lies in the fact that for a work of art to have "content" is, in itself, a rather special stylistic convention. The great task which remains to critical theory is to examine in detail the *formal* function of subject matter.

Until this function is acknowledged and properly explored, it is inevitable that critics will go on treating works of art as "statements." (Less so, of course, in those arts which are or have largely gone abstract, like music and painting and the dance. In these arts, the critics have not solved the problem; it has been taken from them.) Of course, a work of art *can* be considered as a statement, that is, as the answer to a question. On the most elementary level, Goya's portrait of the Duke of Wellington may be examined as the answer to the question: What did Wellington look like? *Anna Karenina* may be treated as an investigation of the problems of love, marriage and adultery. Though the issue of the adequacy of artistic representation to life has pretty much been abandoned in, for example, painting, such adequacy continues to constitute a powerful standard of judgment in most appraisals of serious novels, plays and films. In critical theory, the notion is quite old. At least since Diderot, the main tradition of criticism in all the arts, appealing to such apparently dissimilar criteria as verisimilitude and moral correctness, in effect treats the work of art as *a statement being made in the form of a work of art*.

Inevitably, critics who regard works of art as statements will be wary of "style," even as they pay lip service to "imagination." All that imagination really means for them, anyway, is the supersensitive rendering of "reality." It is this "reality" snared by the work of art that they continue to focus on, rather than on the extent to which a work of art engages the mind in certain transformations.

But if the metaphor of the work of art as a statement loses its authority, the ambivalence toward "style" should dissolve; for this ambivalence mirrors the presumed tension between the statement and the manner in which it is stated.

In the end, however, attitudes toward style cannot be reformed merely by appealing to the "appropriate" (as opposed to utilitarian) way of looking at works of art. The ambivalence toward style is not rooted in simple error—it would then be quite easy to uproot—but in a passion, the passion of an entire culture. This passion is to protect and defend values traditionally conceived of as lying "outside" art, namely, truth and morality, but which remain in perpetual danger of being compromised by art. Behind the ambivalence toward style is, ultimately, the historic Western confusion about the relation between art and morality, the esthetic and the ethical.

For, the problem of art versus morality is a pseudo-problem. The distinction itself is a trap; its continued plausibility rests on not putting the ethical into question but only the esthetic. To argue on these grounds at all, seeking to defend the autonomy of the esthetic (and I have, rather uneasily, done so myself) is already to grant something that should not be granted—namely that there exist two independent sorts of response, the esthetic and the ethical, which vie for our loyalty when we experience a work of art. As if during the experience one really had to choose between responsible and humane conduct, on the one hand, and the pleasurable stimulation of consciousness, on the other.

Of course, we never have a purely esthetic response to works of art—neither to a play or a novel, with its depicting of human beings choosing and acting, nor, though it is less obvious, to a painting by Jackson Pollock or a Greek vase. (Ruskin has written acutely about the moral aspects of the formal properties of painting.) But neither would it be appropriate for us to make a moral response

to something in a work of art in the same sense that we do to an act in real life. I would undoubtedly be indignant if someone I knew murdered his wife and got away with it (psychologically, legally) but I can hardly become indignant, as many critics seem to be, when the hero of Norman Mailer's *An American Dream* murders his wife and remains unpunished. Divine, Darling and the others in Genet's *Our Lady of the Flowers* are not real people whom we are being asked to decide whether to invite into our living rooms; they are figures in an imaginary landscape. The point may seem obvious, but the prevalence of genteel-moralistic judgments in contemporary literary (and film) criticism makes it worth repeating a number of times.

For most people, as Ortega y Gasset has pointed out in "The Dehumanization of Art," esthetic pleasure is a state of mind essentially indistinguishable from their ordinary responses. By art they understand a means through which they are brought in contact with interesting human affairs. When they grieve and rejoice at human destinies in a play or film or novel, it is not really different from grieving and rejoicing over such events in real life—except that the experience of human destinies in art contains less ambivalence, it is relatively disinterested, and it is free from painful consequences. The experience is also, in a certain measure, more intense; for when suffering and pleasure are experienced vicariously, people can afford to be avid. But, as Ortega argues, "a preoccupation with the human content of the work [of art] is in principle incompatible with esthetic judgment."²

Ortega is entirely correct, in my opinion. But I would not care to leave the matter where he does, which tacitly isolates esthetic from moral response. Art is connected with morality, I should argue. One

2 Ortega continues: "... A work of art vanishes from sight for a beholder who seeks in it nothing but the moving fate of John and Mary or Tristan and Isolde and adjusts his vision to this. Tristan's sorrows are sorrows and can evoke compassion only in so far as they are taken as real. But an object of art is artistic only in so far as it is not real. . . . But not many people are capable of adjusting their perceptive apparatus to the pane and the transparency that is the work of art. Instead they look right through it and revel in the human reality with which the work deals. . . . During the 19th century artists proceeded in all too impure a fashion. They reduced the strictly aesthetic elements to a minimum and let the work consist almost entirely in a fiction of human realities. . . . Works of this kind [both Romanticism and Naturalism] are only partially works of art, or artistic objects. . . . No wonder that 19th-century art has been so popular; . . . it is not art but an extract from life."

way that it is so connected is that art may yield moral *pleasure*; but the moral pleasure peculiar to art is not the pleasure of approving of acts or disapproving of them. The moral pleasure in art, as well as the moral service that art performs, consists in the intelligent gratification of consciousness.

Morality is a *form* of acting and not a repertoire of choices. If morality is so understood—as one of the achievements of human will, dictating to itself a mode of acting and being in the world—it becomes clear that no generic antagonism exists between the form of consciousness, aimed at action, which is morality and the nourishment of consciousness which is esthetic experience. Only when works of art are reduced to statements which propose a specific content, and when morality is identified with a particular morality (and any particular morality has its dross, those elements which are no more than a defense of limited social interests and class values)—only then can the experience of a work of art be thought to undermine morality. Indeed, only then can the full distinction between the esthetic and the ethical be made.

But if we understand morality in the singular, as a generic decision on the part of consciousness, then it appears that our response to art is “moral” in so far as it is, precisely, the enlivening of our sensibility and consciousness. For sensibility is exactly that which nourishes our capacity for moral choice, and prompts our readiness to act, assuming that we do choose, which is a prerequisite for calling an act moral, and are not just blindly and unreflectively obeying. Art performs this “moral” task because the qualities which are intrinsic to the esthetic experience (disinterestedness, contemplativeness, attentiveness, the awakening of the feelings) and to the esthetic object (grace, intelligence, expressiveness, energy, sensuousness) are also fundamental constituents of a moral response to life.

In art “content” is, as it were, the pretext, the goal, the lure which engages consciousness in these *formal* processes of transformation.

Take the case of Genet—though here there is additional evidence for the point I am trying to make, because the artist’s intentions are

known. Genet, in his writings, seems to be asking us to approve of cruelty, treacherousness, licentiousness and murder. But so far as he is making a work of art, Genet is not advocating anything at all. He is recording, devouring, transfiguring his experience. In Genet's books, as it happens, this very process itself is his explicit subject; his books are not only works of art but about art. However, even when (as is usually the case) this process is not in the foreground of the artist's demonstration, it is still this, the processing of experience, to which we owe our attention. It is immaterial that Genet's characters might repel us in real life. So would most of the characters in *King Lear*. The interest of Genet lies in the manner whereby his "subject" is annihilated by the serenity and intelligence of his imagination.

Approving or disapproving morally of what a work of art "says" is just as extraneous as becoming sexually excited by a work of art. (Both are, of course, very common.) And the reasons urged against the propriety and relevance of one apply as well to the other. Indeed, in this notion of the annihilation of the subject we have perhaps the only serious criterion for distinguishing between erotic literature or films or paintings which are art, and those which (for want of a better word) one has to call pornography. Pornography has a "content," and is designed to make us connect (with disgust, desire) with that content. It is a substitute for life. But art does not excite; or, if it does, the excitation is appeased, within the terms of the esthetic experience. All great art induces contemplation, a dynamic contemplation. However much the reader or listener or spectator is aroused by a provisional identification of what is in the work of art with real life, his ultimate reaction—insofar as he is reacting to the work as a work of art—must be detached, restful, contemplative, emotionally free, beyond indignation and approval. It is interesting that Genet has recently said that he now thinks that if his books arouse readers sexually, "they're badly written, because the poetic emotion should be so strong that no reader is moved sexually. Insofar as my books are pornographic, I don't reject them. I simply say that I lacked grace."

The objection that this approach reduces art to mere "formalism" must not be allowed to stand. (That word should be reserved for those works of art which mechanically perpetuate outmoded or depleted esthetic formulas.) The sense in which a work of art has no content is no different from the sense in which the world has no con-

tent. Both are. Both need no justification; nor could they possibly have any.

The hyperdevelopment of style in, for example, Mannerist painting and Art Nouveau, is an emphatic form of experiencing the world as a esthetic phenomenon. But only a particularly emphatic form, which arises in reaction against an oppressively dogmatic style of realism. All style—that is, all art—proclaims this. And the world is, ultimately, an esthetic phenomenon.

That is to say, the world (all there is) cannot, ultimately, be justified. Justification is an operation of the mind which can be performed only when we consider one part of the world in relation to another—not when we consider all there is.

The work of art, so far as we give ourselves to it, exercises a total or absolute claim on us. “If art is anything,” as Robbe-Grillet has written, “it is everything; in which case it must be self-sufficient, and there can be nothing beyond it.”

But this position is easily caricatured, for we live in the world, and it is in the world that objects of art are made and enjoyed. The claim that I have been making for the autonomy of the work of art—its freedom to “mean” nothing—does not rule out consideration of the effect or impact or function of art, once it be granted that in this functioning of the art object as art object the divorce between the esthetic and ethical is meaningless.

I have been using the metaphor of nourishment for art. To become involved with a work of art entails, to be sure, the experience of detaching oneself from the world. But the work of art itself also returns us to the world in some way more open and enriched.

If *Hamlet* is “about” anything it is about Hamlet, his particular situation, not about the human condition. A work of art is a kind of showing or recording or witnessing which gives palpable form to consciousness; its object is to make something singular explicit. Insofar as it is true that we cannot judge (morally, conceptually) unless we generalize, then it is also true that the experience of works of art, and what is represented in works of art, transcends judgment though

the work itself may be judged as art. Isn't this just what we recognize as a feature of the greatest art, like the *Iliad* and the novels of Tolstoy and the plays of Shakespeare? That such art overrides our petty judgments, our facile labeling of persons and acts as good or bad? And that this can happen is all to the good. (There is even a gain for the cause of morality in it.)

For morality, unlike art, *is* ultimately justified by its utility: that it makes, or is supposed to make, life more humane and livable for us all. But consciousness—what used to be called, rather tendentiously, the faculty of contemplation—can be, and is, wider and more various than action. It has its nourishment, art and speculative thought, activities which can be described either as self-justifying or in no need of justification. What a work of art does is to make us see or comprehend something singular, not judge or generalize. This act of comprehension accompanied by voluptuousness is the only valid end, and sole sufficient justification, of a work of art.

Perhaps the best way of clarifying the nature of our experience of works of art, and the relation between art and the rest of human feeling and doing, is to invoke the notion of will. It is a useful notion because will is not just a particular posture of consciousness, energized consciousness. It is also an attitude toward the world, of a subject toward the world.

The complex kind of willing that is embodied, and communicated, in a work of art both abolishes the world and encounters it in an extraordinarily intense and specialized way. This double aspect of the will in art is succinctly expressed by Raymond Bayer when he says: "Each work of art gives us the schematized and disengaged memory of a volition." In so far as it is schematized, disengaged, a memory, the willing involved in art sets itself at a distance from the world.

All of which harkens back to Nietzsche's famous statement in *The Birth of Tragedy*: "Art is not an imitation of nature but its metaphysical supplement, raised up beside it in order to overcome it."

All works of art are founded on a certain distance from the lived reality which is represented. This "distance" is, by definition, inhuman or impersonal to a certain degree; for in order to appear to us as art, the work must restrict sentimental intervention and emotional partici-

pation, which are functions of "closeness." It is the degree and manipulating of this distance, the conventions of distance, which constitute the style of the work. In the final analysis, "style" is art. And art is nothing more or less than various modes of stylized dehumanized representation.

But this view—expounded by Ortega y Gasset among others—can easily be misinterpreted, since it seems to suggest that art, so far as it approaches its own norm, is a kind of irrelevant impotent toy. Ortega himself greatly contributes to such a misinterpretation by omitting the various dialectics between self and world involved in the experiencing of works of art. Ortega focuses too exclusively on the notion of the work of art as a certain kind of object, with its own, spiritually aristocratic, standards for being savored. A work of art is first of all an object, not an imitation; and it is true that all great art is founded on distance, on artificiality, on style, on what Ortega calls dehumanization. But the notion of distance (and of dehumanization, as well) is misleading, unless one adds that the movement is not just away from but toward the world. The overcoming or transcending of the world in art is also a way of encountering the world, and of training or educating the will to be in the world. It would seem that Ortega and even Robbe-Grillet, to take a recent exponent of the same position, are still not wholly free of the spell of the notion of "content." For, in order to limit the human content of art, and to fend off tired ideologies like humanism or socialist realism which would put art in the service of some moral or social idea, they feel required to ignore or scant the function of art. But art does not become functionless when it is seen to be, in the last analysis, contentless. For all the persuasiveness of Ortega's and Robbe-Grillet's defense of the formal nature of art, the specter of banished "content" continues to lurk around the edges of their argument, giving to "form" a defiantly anemic, salutarily eviscerated look.

The argument will never be complete until "form" or "style" can be thought of without that banished specter, without a feeling of loss. Valéry's daring inversion—"Literature. What is 'form' for anyone else is 'content' for me"—scarcely does the trick. It is hard to think oneself out of a distinction so habitual and apparently self-evident. One can do so only by adopting a different, more organic, theoretical vantage point—such as the notion of will. What is wanted of such a

vantage point is that it do justice to the twin aspects of art: as object and as function, as artifice and as living form of consciousness, as the overcoming or supplementing of reality and as the making explicit of forms of encountering reality, as autonomous individual creation and as dependent historical phenomenon.

Art is the objectifying of the will in a thing or performance, and the provoking or arousing of the will. From the point of view of the artist, it is the objectifying of a volition; from the point of view of the spectator, it is the creation of an imaginary decor for the will.

Indeed, the entire history of the various arts could be rewritten as the history of different attitudes toward the will. Nietzsche and Spengler wrote pioneer studies on this theme. A valuable recent attempt is to be found in a book by Jean Starobinski, *The Invention of Liberty*, mainly devoted to eighteenth-century painting and architecture. Starobinski examines the art of this period in terms of the new ideas of self-mastery and of mastery of the world, as embodying new relations between the self and the world. Art is seen as the naming of emotions. Emotions, longings, aspirations, by thus being named, are virtually invented and certainly promulgated by art: for example, the "sentimental solitude" provoked by the gardens that were laid out in the eighteenth century and by much admired ruins.

Thus, it should be clear that the account of the autonomy of art I have been outlining, in which I have characterized art as an imaginary landscape or decor of the will, not only does not preclude but rather invites the examination of works of art as historically specifiable phenomena.

The intricate stylistic convolutions of modern art, for example, are clearly a function of the unprecedented *technical* extension of the human will by technology, and the devastating commitment of human will to a novel form of social and psychological order, one based on incessant change. But it also remains to be said that the very possibility of the explosion of technology, of the contemporary disruptions of self and society, depend on the attitudes toward the will which are partly invented and disseminated by works of art at a certain historical moment, and then come to appear as a "realistic" reading of a perennial human nature.

Style is the principle of decision in a work of art, the signature of the artist's will. And as the human will is capable of an indefinite number of stances, there are an indefinite number of possible styles for works of art.

Seen from the outside, that is, historically, stylistic decisions can always be correlated with some historical development—like the invention of writing or of movable type, the invention or transformation of musical instruments, the availability of new materials to the sculptor or architect. But this approach, however sound and valuable, of necessity sees matters grossly; it treats of “periods” and “traditions” and “schools.”

Seen from the inside, that is, when one examines an individual work of art and tries to account for its value and effect, every stylistic decision contains an element of arbitrariness, however much it may seem justifiable *propter hoc*. If art is the supreme game which the will plays with itself, “style” consists of the set of rules by which this game is played. And the rules are always, finally, an artificial and arbitrary limit, whether they are rules of form (like *terza rima* or the twelve tone row or frontality) or the presence of a certain “content.” The role of the arbitrary and unjustifiable in art has never been sufficiently acknowledged. Ever since the enterprise of criticism began with Aristotle's *Poetics*, critics have been beguiled into emphasizing the necessary in art. (When Aristotle said that poetry was more philosophical than history, he was justified insofar as he wanted to rescue poetry, that is, the arts, from being conceived as a type of factual, particular, descriptive statement. But what he said was misleading insofar as it suggests that art gives us something like what philosophy does: an argument. The metaphor of the work of art as an “argument,” with premises and entailments, has informed most criticism since.) Usually critics who want to praise a work of art feel compelled to demonstrate that each part is justified, that it could not be other than it is. And every artist, when it comes to his own work, remembering the role of chance, fatigue, external distractions, knows what the critic says to be a lie, knows that it could well have been otherwise. The sense of inevitability that a great work of art projects is not made up of the inevitability or necessity of its parts, but of the whole.

In other words, what is inevitable in a work of art is the style. To the extent that a work seems right, just, unimaginable otherwise (without loss or damage), what we are responding to is a quality of its style. The most attractive works of art are those which give us the illusion that the artist had no alternatives, so wholly centered is he *in* his style. Compare that which is forced, labored, synthetic in the construction of *Madame Bovary* and of *Ulysses* with the ease and harmony of such equally ambitious works as *Les Liasons Dangereuses* and Kafka's "Metamorphosis." The first two books I have mentioned are great indeed. But the greatest art seems secreted, not constructed.

For an artist's style to have this quality of authority, assurance, seamlessness, inevitability, does not, of course, alone put his work at the very highest level of achievement. Radiguet's two novels have it as well as Bach.

The difference that I have drawn between "style" and "stylization" might be analogous to the difference between will and willfulness.

An artist's style is, from a technical point of view, nothing other than the particular idiom in which he deploys the *forms* of his art. It is for this reason that the problems raised by the concept of "style" overlap with those raised by the concept of "form," and their solutions will have much in common.

For instance, one function of style is identical with, because it is simply a more individual specification of, that important function of form pointed out by Coleridge and Valéry: to preserve the works of the mind against oblivion. This function is easily demonstrated in the rhythmical, sometimes rhyming, character of all primitive, oral literatures. Rhythm and rhyme, and the more complex formal resources of poetry such as meter, symmetry of figures, antitheses, are the means that words afford for creating a memory of themselves before material signs (writing) are invented; hence, everything that an archaic culture wishes to commit to memory is put in poetic form. "The form of a work," as Valéry puts it, "is the sum of its perceptible characteristics, whose physical action compels recognition and tends to resist all those varying causes of dissolution which threaten the expres-

sions of thought, whether it be inattention, forgetfulness, or even the objections that may arise against it in the mind."

Thus, form—in its specific idiom, style—is a plan of sensory imprinting, the vehicle for the transaction between immediate sensuous impression and memory (be it individual or cultural). This mnemonic function explains why every style depends on, and can be analyzed in terms of, some principle of repetition or redundancy.

It also explains the difficulties of the contemporary period of the arts. Today styles do not develop slowly and succeed each other gradually, over long periods of time which allow the audience for art to assimilate fully the principles of repetition on which the work of art is built; but instead succeed one another so rapidly as to seem to give their audiences no breathing space to prepare. For, if one does not perceive how a work repeats itself, the work is, almost literally, not perceptible, and therefore, at the same time, not intelligible. It is the perception of repetitions that makes a work of art intelligible. Until one has grasped, not the "content," but the principles of (and balance between) variety and redundancy in Merce Cunningham's "Winterbranch" or a chamber concerto by Charles Wuorinen or Burroughs' *Naked Lunch* or the "black" paintings of Ad Reinhardt, these works are bound to appear boring or ugly or confusing, or all three.

Style has other functions besides that of being, in the extended sense that I have just indicated, a mnemonic device.

For instance, every style embodies an epistemological decision, an interpretation of how and what we perceive. This is easiest to see in the contemporary, self-conscious period of the arts, though it is no less true of all art. Thus, the style of Robbe-Grillet's novels expresses a perfectly valid, if narrow, insight into relationships between persons and things: namely, that persons are also things and that things are not persons. Robbe-Grillet's behavioristic treatment of persons and refusal to "anthropomorphize" things amounts to a stylistic decision—to give an exact account of the visual and topographic properties of things; to exclude, virtually, sense modalities other than sight, because the language that exists to describe them is less exact and less neutral. The circular repetitive style of Gertrude Stein's "Melanctha" expresses her interest in the dilution of immediate awareness by memory and

anticipation, what she calls "association," which is obscured in language by the system of the tenses. Stein's insistence on the presentness of experience is identical with her decision to keep to the present tense, to choose commonplace short words and repeat groups of them incessantly, to use an extremely loose syntax and abjure most punctuation. Every style is a means of insisting on something.

It will be seen that stylistic decisions, by focusing our attention on some things, are also a narrowing of our attention, a refusal to allow us to see others. But the greater interestingness of one work of art over another does not rest on the greater number of things the stylistic decisions in that work allow us to attend to, but rather on the intensity and authority and wisdom of that attention, however narrow its focus.

In the strictest sense, all the contents of consciousness are ineffable. Even the simplest sensation is, in its totality, indescribable. Every work of art, therefore, needs to be understood not only as something rendered, but also as a certain handling of the ineffable. In the greatest art, one is always aware of things that cannot be said (rules of "decorum"), of the contradiction between expression and the presence of the inexpressible. Stylistic devices are also techniques of avoidance. The most potent elements in a work of art are, often, its silences.

It remains to be said that style is a notion that applies to any experience (whenever we talk about its form or qualities). Just as many works of art which have a potent claim on our interest are impure or mixed with respect to the standard I have been proposing, so many items in our experience which could not be classed as works of art possess some of the qualities of art objects. Whenever speech or movement or behavior or objects exhibit a certain deviation from the most direct, useful, insensible mode of expression or being in the world, we may look at them as having a "style," and being both autonomous and exemplary.

Frank Conroy

WHITE DAYS AND RED NIGHTS

Guy and my mother had weekend jobs as wardens at the Southbury Training School, the Connecticut state institution for the feeble-minded. Every Friday afternoon we drove out to an old cabin deep in the hills they had bought for a few hundred dollars on the installment plan.

The first dirt road was always plowed for the milk truck, but never the second, and in the snow you could see the tracks of wagon wheels and two narrow trails where the horses had walked. A mile down the road was the Greens's farm. Every morning they hauled milk to the pick-up station, a full silent load up the hill, and then back, the empty returns from the previous day clanging raucously behind the horses as if in melancholic celebration. No one else ever used the road. If it was passable we drove to the cabin, if not, we walked, single file in the horse's tracks, our arms full of food.

Every Friday the cheap padlock was opened, every Friday I stepped inside. A room so dim my blood turned gray, so cold I knew no human heart had ever beaten there . . . every line, every article of furniture, every scrap of paper on the floor, every burnt-out match in a saucer filling me with desolation, depopulating me. A single room, twelve feet by eighteen. A double bed, a bureau, a round table to eat on and against the wall a counter with a kerosene cooker. In the exact center of the room, a potbellied coal stove. All these objects had been watched by me in a state of advanced terror, watched so many long nights that even in the daytime they seemed to be whispering bad messages.

My mother would make a quick meal out of cans. Corned beef hash or chili. Conversation was usually sparse.

"I have a good cottage tonight."

"I can't remember where I am. We'd better stop at the administration building."

Outside, the lead gray afternoon slipped almost imperceptibly into twilight. Very gradually the earth moved towards night and every darkening shadow was noted as I sat eating. Guy sipped his coffee and lighted a Pall Mall. My mother arranged the kerosene lamp so she could see to do the dishes.

"Frank, get me some water."

Through the door and into the twilight, the bucket against my thigh. There was a path beaten through the snow, a dark line curving through the drifts to the well. The low sky was empty, uniformly leaden. Stands of trees spread pools of darkness, as if night came up from their sunken roots. At the well I tied a rope to the handle of the bucket and dropped it into the darkness upside down, holding the line. The trick was not to hit the sides. I heard a muffled splash. Leaning over the deep hole, with the faintest hint of warmer air rising against my face, I hauled the bucket hand over hand until it rose suddenly into view, the dim sky shimmering within like some luminous oil. Back to the house with the water. Absolute silence except for the sounds of my own movement, absolute stillness except for a wavering line of smoke from the stovepipe.

While Mother did the dishes Guy and I sat at the table. He sipped at his second cup of coffee. I fished a dime out of my pocket. "Could you get me a couple of Baby Ruth bars?"

Guy sucked his teeth and reached for a wooden pick. "The stuff is poison. It rots your teeth."

"Oh Guy, I know. It won't take you a second. There's a stand in the administration building."

"You're so finicky about food and you go and eat that stuff. Can you imagine the crap in those mass-produced candy bars? Dead roaches and mouse shit and somebody's nose-pickings."

"Guy, for heaven's sake," my mother laughed.

"Well he won't touch a piece of perfectly good meat and then he'll eat that junk."

"It'll only take you a second." I pushed the dime across the table.

"I know the trouble with you. You're too lazy to chew your food. You wash everything down with milk." He glanced at the

coin, his eyes flicking away. "Alright. If you want to kill yourself. Keep the dime." He finished his coffee and cigarette slowly, savoring the mixed flavors and the moment of rest. Since he'd stopped using the holder his smoking style had changed. He'd take a quick drag, blow out about a third of the smoke immediately, inhale the rest and let it come out as he talked. I often made it a point to sit in such a way that a strong light source behind him showed up the smoke. It was amazing how long it came out, a fine, almost invisible blue stream, phrase after phrase, changing direction smoothly as he clipped off the words. For some reason I admired this phenomenon tremendously. I could sit watching for hours.

Guy pushed back his chair and stood up, stretching his arms and yawning exaggeratedly. Even this he did gracefully. Like a cat, he was incapable of making an awkward move. Looking out the window he sucked his teeth noisily. "Well," he said slowly, "the lions and tigers seem to be under control tonight."

I felt my face flush and quickly turned away. It was a complicated moment. My fear of staying alone in the house had been totally ignored for weeks. For Guy to mention it at all was somehow promising, and I was grateful despite the unfairness of his phrasing. He knew of course that it wasn't lions and tigers I was afraid of . . . by using that image he was attempting to simplify my fear into the realm of childishness (which he could then ignore in good conscience) as well as to shame me out of it. Guy was telling me, with a smile, that my behavior was irrational and therefore he could do nothing to help me, something I would never have expected in any case. I knew perfectly well that no one could help me. The only possible solution would have been for me to stay in the city on weekends with Ellen, but that battle had been lost. Guy and Mother wanted me with them. Not because they felt they had to look after me but because I was useful. I drew the water. I tended the fire so the house would be warm in the morning when they returned.

"We'd better go," Mother said, lifting the last dripping dish from the plastic basin. "Frank, you dry the dishes and put them away."

I watched their preparations with a sense of remoteness. It was as if they were already gone. Mother dried her hands carefully and put on her heavy coat. Guy bent over the row of paperback books

and pulled out an Erskine Caldwell. "I won't be able to read tonight but I'll take it anyway."

"Alright?" Mother asked. They stood for the last moment, waiting, making sure they hadn't forgotten anything, sensing in each other the precise moment to leave. Then they were through the door and away. I followed a few moments later, stepping in their footprints to the road. I watched them walk into the darkness underneath the trees. My mother turned at the top of a rise and called back to me over the snow. "Don't forget to set the alarm!" She hurried to catch up with Guy. Moving down the hill it was as if they sank deeper and deeper into the snow. Dimly I could make out the top halves of their bodies, then only their shoulders, their heads, and they were gone.

I went back to the house. After an initial surge of panic my mind turned itself off. Thinking was dangerous. By not thinking I attained a kind of inner invisibility. I knew that fear attracted evil, that the uncontrolled sound of my own mind would in some way delineate me to the forces threatening me, as the thrashing of a fish in shallow waters draws the gull. I tried to keep still, but every now and then the fear escalated up into consciousness and my mind would stir, re-adjusting itself like the body of a man trying to sleep in an uncomfortable position. In those moments I felt most vulnerable, my eyes widening and my ears straining to catch the sound of approaching danger.

I dried the dishes slowly and put them away, attempting to do the whole job without making a sound. Occasionally a floorboard creaked under my weight, sending a long, lingering charge up my spine, a white thrill at once delicious and ominous. I approached the stove nervously. The coal rattled and the cast iron grate invariably banged loudly despite my precautions. I had to do it quickly, holding my breath, or I wouldn't do it at all. Once finished I checked the window latches. There was nothing to be done about the door, it couldn't be locked from the inside. (Mother refused to lock it from the outside because of the danger of my getting trapped in a fire.)

By the yellow light of the kerosene lamp I sat on the edge of the bed and removed my shoes, placing them carefully on the floor. The Big Ben alarm clock ticked off the seconds on a shelf above my head, and every now and then a puff of coal gas popped in the stove as the fuel shifted. I got under the covers fully clothed and surveyed the

stillness of the room, trying to slow my breathing. For an hour or more I lay motionless in a self-induced trance, my eyes open but seldom moving, my ears listening to the sounds of the house and the faint, inexplicable, continuous noises from outside. (In this state my ears seemed rather far away. I was burrowed somewhere deep in my skull, my ears advance outposts sending back reports to headquarters.) As I remember it the trance must have been close to the real thing. It was an attempt to reach an equipoise of fear, a state in which the incoming fear signals balanced with some internal process of dissimulation. At best it worked only temporarily, since fear held a slight edge. But for an hour or two I avoided what I hated most, the great noisy swings up and down. The panic and the hilarity.

At the first flashing thought of the Southbury Training School I sat up and took a book from the shelf. (Escaped inmates were rare, and supposedly harmless, but I knew that a runaway had ripped the teats from one of the Green's cows with a penknife, and that another had strangled four cats in a barnyard.) I read quickly, skimming the pages for action and dialogue while most of my mind stood on guard. Book after book came down from the shelf, piling up on the bed beside me as I waited for sleep. I knew that if I left the lamp on I would stay awake most of the night, so when the pages began to go out of focus I set the alarm clock, cupped my hand over the mouth of the lamp chimney and blew myself into darkness.

Being sleepy and being scared do not cancel each other out. After hours of waiting the mind insists and slips under itself into unconsciousness. The sleeping body remains tense, the limbs bent as if poised for flight, adrenalin oozing steadily into the blood. Every few minutes the mind awakens, listens, and goes back to sleep. Fantastic dreams attempt to absorb the terror, explaining away the inexplicable with lunatic logic, twisting thought to a mad, private vision of circular references so that sleep can go on for another few seconds.

I wake up in the dark, a giant hand squeezing my heart. All around me a tremendous noise is splitting the air, exploding like a continuous chain of fireworks. The alarm clock! My God the clock! Ringing all this time, calling, calling, bringing everything evil. I reach out and shut it off. The vibrations die out under my fingers and I listen to the silence, wondering if anything has approached under the

cover of the ringing bell. (Remember a children's game called Giant Steps?)

I sit up cautiously. My body freezes. Rising before me over the foot of the bed is a bright, glowing, cherry-red circle in the darkness, a floating orb pulsating with energy, wavering in the air like the incandescent heart of some dissected monster, dripping sparks and blood. I throw myself backwards against the wall behind the bed. Books tumble around me from the shelves, an ashtray falls and smashes on the floor. My hands go out, palms extended, towards the floating apparition, my voice whispering "please. . . ." Impossibly a voice answers, a big voice from all around me. "FRANK! FRANK!" My knees give out and I fall off the bed to the floor. I can feel the pieces of broken ashtray under my hands.

From the corner of my eye I see the red circle. I keep quite still, and the circle doesn't move. If I turn my head I seem to sense a correspondent movement, but I can't be sure. In the blackness there is nothing to relate to. Step by step I begin to understand. My body grows calmer and it's as if a series of veils were being whisked away from my eyes. I see clearly that the circle is only the red-hot bottom of the stove . . . a glowing bowl, its surface rippling with color changes from draughts of cool air. The last veil lifts and reveals an image of magic beauty, a sudden miracle in the night. I fall asleep watching it, my shoulder against the bed.

Hours later the cold wakes me and I climb up under the covers. When dawn comes my limbs relax. I can tell when dawn has come even though I'm asleep.

(At every turn I see myself falling down without ceremony . . . running into parked cars, going limp at imaginary voices, etc. The clumsiness of children is comic, not pathetic as the sentimentalists would have us believe, but funny like the Marx Brothers. Children and adults are the same in their attempt to live harmoniously with forces greater than their minds can grasp. Children stop falling when they learn to avoid situations where they've fallen before, not because they understand gravity. Men deal with more complex problems in exactly the same fashion, disregarding the fact that having learned to stand by experience they are still liable to fall, that in fact from the beginning they've learned everything the wrong way. From an article

on safety: "When you feel yourself falling don't topple like a tree, do crumple like an empty sack, falling on the fleshy parts of your body. . . ." Grown men fall in the streets, great national leaders trip over their own shoelaces, astronauts nosedive into bathtubs. The fact that some of them kill themselves only makes it funnier. Learning by experience becomes most comical when it involves loss of life, although it's easier to laugh when it doesn't.

I will not include images of myself falling from a tree, from a seawall, from a horse, from a cow, from the running board of an automobile, nor of myself falling into the front door of a house, and at a different time falling out of the same door, nor of the bloody noses, cut foreheads and broken bones that resulted.)

I woke up when the wagon went by, creaking like a ship, passing close, just on the other side of the wall by my head. Chip would be driving, I knew, with Toad in back watching the cans. They never spoke as they went by. Sometimes Chip would murmur to the horses . . . "haw, gee-aw." The traces rang quietly and the tall iron-rimmed wheels splintered rocks under the snow.

It was hard to get out of bed. The air was cold. Water froze in the bucket and the windows were coated with ice. The light was gray, exactly the same quality as the twilight of the night before, devoid of meaning. I cleaned out the stove, laid paper, a few sticks of kindling and some coal, splashed kerosene over everything and struck a match. With a great whoosh the stove filled with flames. My teeth chattering, I rushed back under the covers. I fell asleep waiting to get warm.

When Guy and my mother came through the door I woke up. They seemed tremendously alive, bustling with energy, their voices strangely loud.

"It's freezing in here. What happened to the fire?"

I sat up in bed. The fire had gone out, or more likely had never caught after the kerosene had burned.

"You forgot to set the alarm," my mother said.

"No, I didn't."

She knelt and relit the fire. Guy stood in the open doorway, knocking snow off his galoshes. He closed the door and sat on the

edge of the bed, bending over to open the buckles. "My God, it's cold. We should have stayed in Florida."

"I vote for that," I said.

"Just get your ass out of that bed." He rubbed his stocking feet and twisted up his face. "How about some coffee?"

"Just a second," my mother said, still fussing with the stove.

Guy stood up and undid his belt. "O.K. Let's go." He waited till I was out of bed, took off his trousers and climbed in. The heavy black and red flannel shirt he wore in cold weather was left on, buttoned tight over his narrow chest. He ran a finger over his moustache and waited for his cup of coffee.

Mother made it for him while I fixed myself a bowl of Corn Flakes.

"It's not very much to ask to keep the stove going," my mother said. "I never ask you to do anything."

I ate my Corn Flakes. The stove was beginning to give off a little heat and I pulled my chair closer, arranging it so my back was to the bed. I heard Mother undressing, and then the creak of the rusty springs as she got in beside Guy. From that moment on I was supposed to keep quiet so they could sleep.

There was no place else to go. Outside the land was hidden under two and a half feet of snow. The wind was sharp and bitter—(I found out only a few years ago that locals considered it the worst winter in forty years)—and in any case I didn't have the proper clothes. Even indoors, sitting in the chair with the stove going, I kept a blanket wrapped around me Indian-style. The time dragged slowly. There was nothing to do. I tried to save the few books for nighttime, when my need of them was greater. I drew things with a pencil . . . objects in the room, my hand, imaginary scenes . . . but I was no good and quickly lost interest. Usually I simply sat in the chair for six or seven hours. Guy snored softly, but after the first hour or so I stopped hearing it.

Midway through the morning I remembered the candy bars. Certain Guy had forgotten them, I looked anyway, getting up from the chair carefully, tiptoeing to his clothes and searching through the pockets. Nothing. I watched him in bed, his face gray with sleep, his open mouth twitching at the top of each gentle snore. My mother turned to the wall. Guy closed his mouth and rolled over. The room was absolutely silent. I went back to the chair.

They awoke in the early afternoon and stayed in bed. Although the small stove was working it was still the warmest place. Freed from the necessity of keeping quiet, I walked around the room aimlessly, getting a drink of water, rubbing the haze off the windows to look outside. My mother raised her voice and I realized she was talking to me.

"Take some money from my purse and go down to the Greens' and get a dozen eggs."

The trip to the Greens' would take an hour each way. Outside the temperature was five or ten degrees above zero and it was windy. I didn't want to go. My heart sank because I knew I had to.

Children are in the curious position of having to do what people tell them, whether they want to or not. A child knows that he must do what he's told. It makes little difference whether a command is just or unjust since the child has no confidence in his ability to distinguish between them. Justice for children is not the same as justice for adults. In effect all commands are morally neutral to a child. Yet because almost every child is consistently bullied by older people he quickly learns that if in some higher frame of reference all commands are equally just, they are not equally easy to carry out. Some fill him with joy, others, so obviously unfair that he must paralyze himself to keep from recognizing their quality, strike him instantly deaf, blind and dumb. Faced with an order they sense is unfair children simply stall. They wait for more information, for some elaboration that will take away the seeming unfairness. It's a stupid way of defending one's self, but children are stupid compared to adults, who know how to get what they want.

"Couldn't we wait until they come up with the wagon?"

"No. The walk will do you good. You can't sit around all day, it's unhealthy."

"Oh Mother, it'll take hours."

Suddenly Guy sat up, his voice trembling with anger. "Look, this time just go. No arguments this time."

I looked at him in amazement. He'd never even raised his voice to me before. It was against the unwritten rules . . . my mother was the disciplinarian. I could see he was tremendously angry and I had no idea why. Even my mother was surprised. "Take it easy," she said to him softly, "he's going."

Guy's anger should have tipped me off, but it didn't. Wearing his galoshes and his overcoat I went to the Greens's without realizing why they had sent me.

It was no secret that I wanted to go along to the training school at night, to sleep on an extra bed somewhere. For months mother put me off, but when she realized I would never get accustomed to staying alone she gave in. She was tired of dealing with me, tired of my complaints and my silences. (Alternative unconscious motivations for her change of heart: one—she felt guilty about me; two—she decided to show me something that was worth being afraid of, namely the worst men's cottage, to which Guy was assigned the night I tagged along.)

We drove slowly down the steep, twisting road to Southbury, our headlight beams traversing back and forth across the snow. Guy leaned over the wheel, craning his neck to watch for the cut-off through the black truncated trees. "It's along here somewhere."

"We have to pass that boarded-up farmhouse," my mother said.

"Here it is." He applied the brakes slowly and the tires pulled against the sanded road. We were entering the grounds through the back, saving a mile. The car bumped along through the woods for a few hundred yards and then emerged at the top of a hill.

The Southbury Training School spread below us like a toy village in a Christmas display. Small dormitories disguised to look like suburban homes were spread evenly over a square mile of stripped and graded hillside. Halfway down, the two administrative buildings rose into the air, their white cupolas lighted by floodlights. Weaving across the hillside in every direction were the lines and curves of a network of private roads, described in the darkness by chains of street lights winking on slender poles.

Guy edged the Ford over the lip of the hill and the bumpy dirt road changed immediately to a smooth, carefully plowed asphalt ribbon. We rolled along silently, watching the powdered snow drift across the surface of the road under the headlights.

"There it is," my mother said as we approached one of the dormitories. "Number twelve."

Guy pulled up in the driveway. There was a brass knocker on the front door, and a mailbox, and a green metal tube on a stand

with "Danbury Times" written in elaborate lettering. I caught some movement out of the corner of my eye. The blinds were raised on one of the ground floor windows and a girl stood combing her hair with long, even strokes. She saw the lights of the car and smiled. Half her teeth were gone. I looked away quickly.

My mother rang the bell and stood close to the door to be out of the wind. Almost immediately it swung open, spilling a long bar of yellow light across the snow. She lifted her hand in a signal that could just as easily have meant we should wait a moment as to wave goodbye, and was gone.

We drove slowly across the hill towards the boy's side of the school. In the bad weather the roads were empty.

"It looks deserted," I said.

"It isn't. Wait till you get inside."

The tires spun on a patch of ice as we climbed the driveway to cottage eight. We stopped next to a black Chevy, the only car in the parking area. Its windshield was coated with snow.

"That's Olsen's car. He has the shift before mine."

"It's brand new."

"Some of these guys work two shifts. They make a lot of money."

"Why don't you?"

He laughed. We sat for a moment, watching the building. Guy took out a cigarette. "The smell is pretty bad at first but after a couple of hours you don't notice it."

I could see small ways in which the building differed from the one my mother had entered. There was no box for the newspaper, no potted evergreens at the edge of the drive. Even in the darkness one could see that the front door needed painting. Some of the shutters were closed.

"None of these people are dangerous, are they?"

Guy finished his cigarette. "They're just feeble-minded. They can't take care of themselves."

We stepped out of the car. The air was cold and gusts of wind seemed to pass uninterrupted through my clothes. After a few steps the smell began, like a tangible line in space. (Smells are hard to describe. This was a combination of pine, vomit, licorice, old urine, sweat, soap and wet hair—a compound of smells all the more unpleasant for its unspecific nature.) Guy rang the bell and after a few moments the door opened.

I was prepared, of course, but prepared through my imagination, and I couldn't possibly have imagined the reality. First of all it was hot, really hot, like a furnace room. I began to sweat immediately. The smell was overpowering. It was useless to breathe carefully as I'd done outside, here the smell was so pungent and thick it seemed to have taken the place of air—a hot substitute filling my lungs, seeping into my blood and making me its own creature. With the first deep breath I was no longer an air breather, I'd changed to another species.

It was noisy. A noise that raised the hair on the back of my neck. Far-out throats, tongues and lips forming sounds that wound their independent way up and down the scale with no relation to anything. Whispering, mumbling, fake laughter and true laughter, bubbling sounds, short screams, bored humming, weeping, long, roller coaster yells . . . all of it in random dynamic waves like some futuristic orchestra. In this meaningless music were sudden cries of such intense human significance that I stood paralyzed.

It was as if all the saints, martyrs and mystics of human history were gathered into a single building, each one crying out at the moment of revelation, each one truly *there* at his extreme of joy or pain, crying out with the purity of total selflessness. There was no arguing with these sudden voices above the general clamor, they rang true. All around me were men in a paroxysm of discovery, seeing lands I had never known existed, calling me with a strength I had never known existed. But they called from every direction with equal power, so I couldn't answer. I stood balanced on the pinpoint of my own sanity, a small, cracked tile on the floor.

"They're a little noisy now. It's just before bedtime and we let them blow off some steam."

I looked up and discovered a huge man standing in front of me, smiling. Involuntarily I took a step backward. He was all eyes, immense white eyes impossibly out of his head, rushing at me. No, he was wearing his eyes like glasses. Two bulbous eyes in steel frames. He turned his head and the illusion disappeared. Thick lenses, that was all. His bald head gleamed with sweat. His arm was as big as my leg.

"I'm Olsen," he said.

"Where's Guy?"

"He'll be back in a minute."

There was movement behind his back. I watched from the corner of my eye, afraid to look directly. A naked man slipping into the room, hunched over like a beaten dog; a shiny thread of spittle hanging from his jaw. He cruised silently along the wall, limp fingers touching the plaster, turned and stopped, his shaggy head facing the blank wall one inch away. Without even looking Olsen raised his voice and said "Back to bed."

The creature lifted one leg and touched his toes to the surface of the wall as if it was a ladder he was about to climb. Below the tangle of black hair in his crotch, almost halfway to the knee, his veined penis and scrotum hung limply against the inside of his thigh. It was as if they'd been grabbed and stretched like soft taffy. His toes scratched the wall. Olsen took a step towards him, leaning over slightly, and clapped his hands smartly. "Back to Bed!" The creature scurried along the wall and disappeared through an open doorway. For the first time I noticed there were no doors. Doorways without doors. From each darkened passageway the noises rushed at us. Suddenly, the sound of a crash. Olsen knew just where it came from. "Back in a second," he said.

Alone in the room, I stood by the door, my hand touching the knob. I could hear Olsen shouting in another part of the building. Far back in the corridors half-visible figures were moving in the dim light. I supposed that Guy was with them.

An old man appeared, hesitating at the edge of the room. When he saw me he froze instantly, like some highly trained hunting animal. His watery blue eyes were fuzzy spirals and his cheeks sank into his head making hollows the size of Ping Pong balls. He wore a kind of diaper from which his skinny legs, all tendon and finely wrinkled skin, emerged, half bent with age. He took a step forward.

"Back to bed!" I said. "Back to bed!" For a moment he didn't move, then, leaning his head back he opened his mouth and revealed two gleaming pink gums, toothless, looking like wet rubber. His thin shoulders shook with laughter. When his fuzzy eyes found me he shouted across the room.

"Sonny, I've been here since before you were born. I don't even belong here. I belong in a mental hospital. Everybody knows that." He turned and left the room.

I wanted to wait outside until Guy came back. There was a large brass lock high on the door. I turned what seemed to be the appropriate knob but the bolt didn't move. Examining the mechanism more closely I heard a noise behind me.

Something was rushing down one of the corridors, something low and fast. No bullfighter ever waited for his foe more apprehensively. To my amazement I found myself giving a short, nervous laugh, a desperate guffaw in the teeth of my predicament. Zooming into the room was a flash of chrome-man, a monstrous human machine blurred with speed, bearing down on me like some homicidal hot-rod. A man in a wheelchair, but what kind of a man? His body was tiny, like a child's, his head impossibly huge, the size of a watermelon. Flailing at the wheels of his chair like some berserk row-boat enthusiast he backed me into a corner and threw his hands into my face.

"See my pretty racelet?" he said in a high voice. "See my pretty racelet?"

Flinching, twisting to avoid the touch of his wild hands, I tried to slip past. He slammed his chair into the wall and trapped me.

"See my pretty racelet?"

"What? What do you want? What?" Reluctantly I looked him in the eye. His bland idiot's features seemed small in the gargantuan hydrocephalic head. All scrunched together in the cavity that was his face they stared out at me like a fish from a goldfish bowl.

"See my pretty racelet?" he said, still holding his arms up. In a tantrum of infantile frustration he drummed his heels against the bottom of the chair. "See! See!"

"He wants you to look at his bracelet," Guy said, grabbing the back of the chair and pulling him away. "This is Freddie. His nickname is pinhead."

"Pinhead, pinhead! See!"

"Go ahead," Guy said. "Just look at it."

Around the creature's wrist was a cheap chrome I.D. bracelet. He held his hand motionless when he realized I was looking at it. The word FREDDIE was engraved in block letters. I touched it with my index finger. "It's very pretty. Very nice."

"Pretty racelet?" Freddie said, calmer now.

"Yes. Very pretty."

"Pretty racelet?"

Olsen appeared from one of the corridors. His big feet clomped noisily on the tile floor. "Time for lights out?"

"O.K." Guy answered, rolling Freddie away. "Frank, you can go in the office." He pointed to an open doorway.

Freddie rocked back and forth in the chair. "Lice-out. Lice-out. Lice-out."

Olsen reached out and slapped his immense dome with an open hand. "Shut up, idiot." They rolled him down one of the corridors.

The office was a small room with a desk, a chair and a cot. There was no door to close. I sat on the cot and watched the blank wall. As Guy and Olsen progressed through the building turning out lights the screaming gradually subsided, falling to a steady murmur like the crowd noises in a movie. It was less nerve wracking, but somehow more ominous. The mood in the building was changing from wildness to slyness. Plans were beginning to cook in countless heads, and as a novelty, a break in the routine, it seemed to me that I would be the focus. I jumped up nervously as Olsen came in. He looked down at me, his big white eyes embedded in their surrealistic lenses. "I'm going off now. I want to show you something."

I followed him out of the office, sticking close behind. We took a few steps into a hallway and stopped. In the gloom stray rays of light collected in his glasses like fireflies.

"The boys are harmless. They're scareder of you than you are of them, so you got nothing to worry about. I want to show you this guy so you know what he looks like. A couple of times he's grabbed a broom and snuck up behind somebody and belted them. If he ever tries anything all you got to do is look him in the eye and he backs down."

"Maybe it's better if he doesn't see me."

"He won't. He can't see past the light."

There was a snapping sound and a powerful flashlight beam showed us a glowing circle of green wall. We took a few steps and the beam spilled into a small room. With a flick of his wrist Olsen found the occupant, sitting on his bed, knees drawn up to his chest, rocking slowly back and forth. (In the South they call it hunkering.) He looked young, and strong . . . completely normal except for his nakedness and the fixed expression of anger on his face. His eyes blinked in the strong light but he didn't look away. The creaking of the bed-springs stopped as he held himself rigid. He seemed to be looking

directly into my eyes in a contest of wills. Suddenly his head jerked forward and a glob of spittle curved through the air and fell at my feet.

"Tough guy," said Olsen. "Once he threw his own shit at me. But he'll never do that again."

My eyes were locked with the inmate's. "Did you punish him?"

"Punish him!" Olsen laughed. "I beat the living daylights out of him. He was in the infirmary for three days."

"Did he understand?"

"What?"

"Did he understand why you hit him?"

"He didn't throw no more shit so I guess he did."

"What's his name?"

"Gregory."

"Can we go back now?"

"He doesn't know how lucky he is. He's the only one in the building with a room of his own. Look." He flashed his light up the hall. Beds were set up along the walls of the corridor. People were sitting up in them watching us silently. Most of them fell back as the light struck them, like dominoes in a row. To the rest Olsen yelled "Lights out! Bedtime!"

"Can we go back now?"

Olsen had gone off duty and Guy and I were in the office.

"Lovely, isn't it?" Guy said sitting on the edge of the desk.

"Is there anyplace with a door? I'd feel better with a door."

"No, but you'll be alright."

"What about that guy name Gregory?"

"He won't do anything. He's probably asleep. They go to sleep like *that*." He snapped his fingers. After a moment he raised his head and stared out the doorway. "Isn't it incredible the way some of them are hung? They've got equipment a horse wouldn't be ashamed of."

"Guy, I don't think I can make it."

"It's perfectly safe." He stood up. "I've got to make the rounds."

"I can't stay here."

"Well I can't take you back. You'll just have to."

"I'll sleep in the car."

"It's freezing out there."

"I'll take some blankets. It'll be alright."

He stood for a moment without answering.

"Please, Guy."

"O.K. Suit yourself. I've got to make the rounds." He started out, then looked back. "If it gets too cold out there you'd better come back in."

"I will. Yes. Thanks." Quickly I began to strip the blankets from the cot. Then, remembering, I rushed after him. "Guy! The lock! How do you work the lock?"

So for the rest of the winter I stayed in the cabin at night. I never got used to it, but in some ways the nights were better than the days. The nights were warm fantasies of terror, technicolor nightmares. I recognized somehow that everything happening to me alone at night in the cabin was of a low order of reality. My hallucinations, the fear itself, the entire drama came from inside my own head. I was *making* it all, and although it was terrifying, it was not, as were the days, philosophically threatening.

The days were emptiness, a vast, spacious emptiness in which the fact of being alive became almost meaningless. The first fragile beginnings of a personality starting to collect in my twelve-year-old soul were immediately sucked up into the silence and the featureless winter sky. The overbearing, undeniable reality of those empty days! The inescapable fact that everything around me was non-human, that in terms of snow and sky and rocks and dormant trees I didn't exist, these things rendered me invisible even to myself. I wasn't conscious of what was happening, I lived it. I became invisible. I lost myself.

At night I materialized. The outlines of my body were hot, flushed, sharply defined. My senses were heightened. I knew I was real as I populated the darkness with extensions of myself. If the sky was more real than I was, then I was more real than my phantoms.

But the days predominated. The flat sky. As the winter passed a unique sense of desolation crept deeper and deeper into my mind. I wasn't afraid, it was too nebulous for that, but I was profoundly uneasy. Perhaps in the back of my mind was the fear that everything would go blank, that I would become the sky, without a body, without thought. I remembered the peculiarly impersonal quality of some of the screams in cottage eight.

In the spring I started going down to the school just to hang around, walking the four miles with a quarter in my pocket to get

a milk shake at the soda fountain in the Administration building. I roamed freely through the public rooms. In a scaled-down bowling alley I used to set up the pins for myself after each frame. Sometimes there were movies in the auditorium. I'd wait for a group of boys to come across the lawn behind their counselor and tag along at the end. I remember a conversation I had one day before a Gene Autry picture with a boy who attracted my attention because I thought he looked exactly like myself.

"Who're you?" he asked. "Are you new?"

"No. I'm Mr. Trudeau's son."

"He takes our cottage at night sometimes. He's O.K. He never hits you."

"Do the others?"

"Some of them."

(Whistles and applause as Mr. Miller, the director of the school, climbs on stage to make a few announcements before the picture. I laugh at the wildness of the audience. They're having a great time.)

"I'm going home next week," the boy says. "If you're around you'll see the car. It's a red Buick."

"We have a Ford."

"My pop's a policeman. He carries a gun."

(More whistles and cheers as the house lights go down and the picture begins. I watch the boy. There's no way to tell anything is wrong with him.)

The Southbury School affected me more deeply than I realized at the time. Most immediately it was a place in which being different was a good thing. I was different only because I wasn't feeble-minded. My general loneliness in the world was dramatized microcosmically, in terms favorable to myself.

I believed I was intelligent. For a long time that thought had been important to me. At the school I felt for the first time that my intelligence was worth something to someone else besides myself. Here was a huge organization, an immense, powerful world existing for the inmate, but existing for me as well. I was the other extreme. At last I'd found someplace where my only possession would be relevant! (To picture myself as being aware of all this would be a mis-

representation. I wasn't vain. I didn't look down on the boys. In some ways I needed the school as much as they did, and I certainly felt closer to them than to the children at conventional schools.)

But of course the Southbury School, except for one incident, was as uninterested in me as the world it symbolized. Which is as it should be. While I passed through the luxurious agonies of growing up, desperately trying to get through to a psychologist in the library of the Administration building, there were boys next door who were never going to grow up at all, boys who would starve to death without someone to feed them.

I was alone in the library reading *Life* magazine. A man stopped in the hallway and looked at me through the double glass doors. I watched him come in without raising my head.

"Hi," he said casually. "What are you reading?"

"Just this magazine."

"It's a good issue. I've read it myself." He spoke to me as if we were old friends. "You remember me, don't you?"

It came to me in a flash. He'd mistaken me for one of the boys. Perhaps the boy from the movies who looked so much like me. A bewildering array of emotions exploded simultaneously . . . confusion, embarrassment, a kind of childish love, apprehensiveness, but behind it all, as steady as the solid bar of sunlight across the polished table, triumph. The moment was at hand.

"Oh course you're not really reading it, are you?" he said. "You mean you're looking at the pictures."

"No. I'm reading it."

"Don't you remember me? I'm Dr. Janetello."

I hesitated, trying to think up an answer, but he went on.

"Would you mind reading something for me?"

I looked down at the page. "Members of the eighty-second airborne reserves bail out over Colorado. Four thousand men took part in a mock attack. . . ."

"That's enough," he said. There were two books on the table that I'd taken from the shelves. He picked them up. "*The Short Stories of de Maupassant* and *Pickwick Papers*. Do you read this too?"

"Yes. I liked *David Copperfield* so I thought I'd try this."

"How did you get in here?" he asked quickly. "Are you from Southbury?"

"My stepfather works here.

"You think it's clever to play me along like that?"

I didn't answer. It was going wrong. I looked up at his round face. A few beads of sweat were collected along his upper lip and his eyes suddenly seemed very small.

"Do you have permission to use the library?"

"No. I guess not."

He stood for a moment without saying anything, as if undecided whether to continue. Then he dropped the books on the table with a bang, turned quickly and left the room. The double doors continued swinging long after he was gone.

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BALLET AND BALANCHINE

Last spring the American Ballet Theatre and the English Royal Ballet brought loud cries of release from the prisoners of that tyrant at the New York City Ballet. But since Balanchine seems to me not only one of the very greatest but also one of the most richly inventive artists in the world, I didn't need any release from him. Compared with his variety, the heralded variety of repertory at Ballet Theatre seemed rather an illusion: some evenings you did get four ballets by four different choreographers, but often there was only one you really wanted to see. It is true that five new ballets by four choreographers were mounted and a Danish classic revived, but of these only Robbins' *Les Noces* was a major work; the other four (including two feeble tries by Agnes de Mille) were far less than minor, and the classic, *La Sylphide*, was a tedious bundle of romantic clichés. It was good to see once again some of the older ballets of Robbins, Lander, Tudor, de Mille, Loring, Ross and Fokine—Balanchine ought to acquire some of these. But of all these choreographers apparently only Robbins can be counted on for distinguished new work. Nor was the dancing at Ballet Theatre what it was cracked up to be. It was really quite bad at the top, among the stars, most of them strikingly ill-favored and cold. There was fine work by Sallie Wilson, Ruth Ann Koesun, William Glassman and a few others; the company as a whole was capable; the whole enterprise was ambitiously planned and it turned into a sellout. But for me going night after night proved depressing. I *have* been spoiled by Balanchine, then, the way Mozart spoils your interest in Cimarosa.

But Robbins is no Cimarosa and Ballet Theatre may be proud of having spent the effort and money it took to mount his handsome new piece. There are some tantalizing descriptions of Nijinska's *Les Noces* that make her ballet sound shatteringly intense and powerful—Denby uses the word "frenzy"—and I was at first disappointed that Robbins had not achieved something on this emotional level. Later I realized that he hadn't wanted to and still later I realized that he had made an impressively right choice. For *Les Noces* isn't *Le Sacre du Printemps*:

its movement is steady and busy, not convulsively dynamic; it enacts a ritual of initiation into settled social living and working rather than the mysterious imprecations and celebrations of *Le Sacre*. Robbins was right then to choose so small a vocabulary and so narrow a dynamic range, for he could shape these deliberately limited materials into just the right kind of continuously active yet continuously alive ballet. Two huge icons on the backdrop were echoed in a few dance details reminiscent of Russian folk style but in the main the ballet suggested a more general metaphor of marriage rites. Robbins' view of these rites is interestingly cool but optimistic. That the young bride and groom are nervous and timid is something we are asked to notice without getting worked up about it, nor does the young couple get much sympathy from the society so busily and efficiently managing its affairs. The necessary things are done fully and sincerely but with no great emotional fuss: everyone knows that everything will work out. Two moments of higher eloquence hint at the deeper emotions which are being channeled and dispersed by the busy ritual: there is a dance of sadness for the two mothers, and at the end some abrupt abstract gestures express the consummation of the marriage. These moments were brief but beautifully accurate and sufficient: the whole ballet left behind an impression of proportion and self-discipline all the more remarkable after the overtly shocking meaningfulness of *The Cage* and the razzle-dazzle of *West Side Story*. *Les Noces* is one of Robbins' best works because, like *Fancy Free* and *The Afternoon of a Faun*, it is a spontaneously and modestly meaningful structure of movement. Our best native-born choreographer is still a major talent and a sincere one.

It was only the dancers at the Royal Ballet—particularly Fonteyn and Nureyev—who were worth the staggering price of admission, and they were correctly praised in the press, though some critics wrote about Nureyev with an unpleasant jealous reserve. The repertory was also praised, quite mystifyingly, since the two new works reconfirmed the fact that, apart from the classics, the Royal Ballet's repertory is an embarrassing display of artistic impotence. As it happened, both new works were, like Balanchine's new full-length *Don Quixote*, adaptations of literary masterpieces and a comparison between them proved cruelly irresistible. Adaptation of a literary theme is as legitimate an enterprise in ballet as in any of the other arts so long as the literary inspiration gets genuinely transformed into the new medium. Balanchine does this as naturally as breathing, but in the Royal Ballet's *Romeo and Juliet* it didn't even begin to happen. Macmillan's first mistake was to have chosen the bad Prokofiev score—bad in itself as music, worse because its structure all but forces the choreographer into the literal kind of

storytelling prescribed in the modern Russian ballet, which tells both too much and too little. You have to know the story to understand the relationships and the motivations, but since everybody does know this story, there's no need to tell so drearily much of it. Actually it is not a very good story for ballet because the lovers are so seldom and so briefly alone together. Shakespeare's language can master this difficulty and actualize the lovers' poignant frustrations and intensities. But Macmillan is incapable of even the remotest approximation to "It seems she hangs upon the cheek of night / As a rich jewel in an Ethiop's ear." This young choreographer, indeed, seems to me very thinly endowed with the basic choreographic gift. I think he is in the wrong profession: *Romeo and Juliet* looked less like a ballet than like an opera—without the singing, of course, and therefore without any *raison d'être* but with plenty of local color. You could tell it was a ballet because the people moved like ballet dancers, but you didn't come to know the meaning of the story through dancing. True, in the first scene there was a set piece for Romeo and his friends that showed they *were* friends by making them all do the same incessant and unmotivated leaping. But most of the dancing in this first scene was not only as bad as most opera-ballet but in exactly the same style. For the lovers themselves, Macmillan contrived, besides the general emptiness, an awkward mixture of modes: there were some conventionally pretty lifts and a lot of conventionally ardent rushing about the stage—all so timed and placed as to have the effect of cliché—but Juliet mooned around on her balcony like Natalie Wood on a front porch in Kansas. A minute later she was running down a broad staircase to *dance* with Romeo—why bother with the whole business unless you're going to respect the balcony scene? Even after this violation Macmillan was unable to make an interesting dance-relationship between the two. Later Mercutio did die quite amusingly, using his sword as a pretend-mandolin to sing his own epitaph; but for "A plague o' both your houses!" he shook a fist in both directions. There were many scenes and many sets into which the lovers ran to get married or take their potions, but since nothing was realized in dance, your boredom finally extended even to the handsome sets which had given a real, if conventional, pleasure at first. Fonteyn and Nureyev would have brought their unique personal power to the roles, Seymour and Gable might have brought a special poignancy and ardor: I saw the third or fourth cast in which Merle Park was lovely, Macleary smoothly uninteresting and the celebrated Mercutio of David Blair seemed quite routine.

It was so reckless of Ashton to show *The Dream*, his short version of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, to an audience familiar with Balanchine's

version that even the relentless anti-Balanchine campaign of the *Times's* Allen Hughes showed the strain. All he could manage was the warning that although the Balanchine ballet was more magical, moving and entertaining, and although Ashton corned up everything he possibly could, nevertheless "All that glitters is not gold" and Balanchine's ballet was probably only superficially more *attractive*: deep down Ashton's must be better. My eyes couldn't reach that far. Ashton, it is true, is a real choreographer by trade, though he has never been a very interesting one, and *The Dream* was a real ballet, but it was a very boring and bad one. An index of Ashton's musicality was that he asked the conductor to "arrange" the Mendelssohn music so that the opening bars of the Intermezzo could be used repeatedly as Helena's *leit-motiv*; worse was the corny comic strip distraction that she danced to this loveliest and purest expression of Romantic passion. When Bottom wore his ass's head he also wore toe shoes, so that as Titania's lover he became a twittery, prissy coquette—why? The reconciled Titania and Oberon danced a nice long empty *grand pas de deux*. Even if Ashton had made this an interesting dance, it would have been hard to forget Balanchine's choice *not* to render the reconciliation in this conventional way but instead to have Titania and Oberon leave the stage in separate grandeur after that lovely ritual blessing of their attendant spirits. It is through such choices that a genuine re-creation of a literary work is achieved.

Balanchine's choices in *Don Quixote* may seem at first odd ones. The ballet begins very slowly, for one thing, and without much dancing. Don Quixote himself is not strongly characterized in the first two acts, and his relationship with Sancho Panza—the famous duality of spirit and flesh—is only lightly sketched in. Balanchine has not in fact been faithful to what most people find important in Cervantes. But I am content in principle that he should find in the great classic his own kind of themes out of which to develop his own kind of ballet, and I am more than content when the ballet turns out to be as fascinating and moving as this one.

What interests Balanchine is Don Quixote's dreams of beautiful women and the progressively more humiliating consequences of those dreams. The first dream establishes some key aspects of feeling and tone, for the first "lady in distress" the Don dreams about while reading his great books of romance appears to *us* as a tiny girl kneeling on one of the books and imploring aid with touchingly comic gestures of her fragile little arms. This figure not only instantly defines the purity of the Don's chivalric belief in the purity and vulnerability of women, but also evokes our amused but moved and respectful response to that ideal. There follows an extraordinarily interesting progression of other encoun-

ters. The next woman is a variation on the first but from the real world—a young serving-girl so devoted to her master as to dry his tired old feet with her hair. She disappears up a staircase into a golden idealizing light, then reappears in the Don's fantasy as the ideal Dulcinea; at this point the Don formally initiates his role as knightly adventurer. For a while not much happens. He strides about slowly, nobly, correctly (and comically), waiting for injustices to come along. Some prisoners he rescues turn on him in episodes which verge on mild slap-stick. But in a bright village square suddenly appears the more promisingly dramatic tableau of a dead poet and his guilty mistress. The crowd reviles her, the Don saves her, and what happens next is the emotional and choreographic high point of the act. This woman (who is danced by the same dancer who plays Dulcinea) expresses her gratitude to the Don for his noble act and his noble opinion of her in a dance that is one of Balanchine's greatest things, and it is danced—as the whole role is danced—by Suzanne Farrell more beautifully than I can begin to suggest. The guilty woman belongs to a sophisticated courtly world and her dance is a knowing exhibition piece in an artificial pastoral style: now stalking elegantly this way and that on her points, now balancing herself archly on her shepherdess's crook, now leaping with bold athletic prowess, finally drifting away with delicately coquettish backward glances. Yet this exhibition-dance has real dignity and purity too, as if she had been created into sincerity of feeling and nobility of character by the Don's belief in her. From this height of emotion Balanchine bangs the action down to farce again as the Don destroys a puppet show in order to save another lady in distress, who turns out to be the little girl from the first dream, her fragile, charmingly stiff little limbs now engaged in a tiny parody of classical adagio. This ballet-joke diminishes our involvement in the Don's dreams and humiliations, and at the end of the act the Don is discovered as an amusing "curiosity" by a grand Duke and Duchess, who lead him away to their court.

The brilliant second act is full of dancing. First the gorgeous ceremonious entrance of the courtiers, followed by lost-looking Don Quixote, then a superb series of bold, assured, rather sensual dance-entertainments. The Don watches courteously but, you believe, uncomprehendingly. The atmosphere of sophisticated corruption thickens as the courtiers draw the Don into a suave formal dance during which he is made the butt of quiet malice which culminates in open ridicule. When he is left in disgrace, the vision of Dulcinea enters to comfort him: in this *pas de deux*, another high point, Balanchine transforms conventional adagio into the heartbreaking illusion of a young girl supporting a tired old man.

The third act begins with a long dream of Dulcinea and *her* court of pure and beautiful women. This group dance is at first totally happy in its idealization, all curving softness and effortless grace, in strong contrast to the sensual brilliance of the second act dances, and it is strangely moving to see that Dulcinea is now fresh and free, lifted gloriously by a handsome young man instead of herself supporting the aged and humiliated knight. But this dream runs into trouble. Dulcinea's variation is from the beginning agitated and fearful and is interrupted by a sinister man and woman in black—romantic ballet's magician and his erotically evil accomplice. When these figures threaten Dulcinea, the Don wakes up in alarm and charges into his most deluded battle to save the ideal. It is at this point that Balanchine introduces at last the windmills and the imaginary giants, to spectacular effect. But the "spectacle" is charged with deep feeling by now. The Don's furious impotence reduces him to crawling about on all fours like a mad dog; he is captured impersonally but not unkindly by officials and brought home in a cage to die. On his deathbed he is admonished by a (some-what too long) procession of religious figures; in the background the burning of his books becomes a hellfire; yet despite these warnings his final vision is again of Dulcinea. After his death, though, the serving-girl lays a homemade crucifix on his breast.

This fascinating "story" is Balanchine's own invention and I need add only that he has fleshed it out with almost unfaltering inspiration. Nabokov's score is the weak element, though even it is occasionally efficient enough at providing theatrical atmosphere. All the rest—sets, costumes, lighting, dancing—is superb. But by far the most beautiful thing of all is what Suzanne Farrell dances and the way she dances it. She is the latest of Balanchine's "creations" and now, at nineteen, she gives the illusion of being the most wonderful dancer one has ever seen. Balanchine has created such illusions before. By calling her a creation of Balanchine, I do not mean for a moment that she is anything less than a dancer of the highest class in her own right, but merely to stress the fact that she is working in the best possible climate. Her talents, her technique, her personality are being developed not only by the general standards of the Balanchine company and by the unusually rich and demanding roles of the regular repertory of that company, but also by the special roles Balanchine has created particularly for her. The rapidity of Suzanne Farrell's rise to genuine stardom has been phenomenal, but the same conditions have produced with the other dancers of the company only slightly less spectacular results, which means that the development of both the young dancers (Paul, Schorer, Neary, Morris, Blum and others) and the great stars

(Verdy, Kent, Villella) is one of the most exciting things in the world to watch. I wish I could pay detailed attention to their beautiful performances in the regular repertory: Schorer's new grandeur in the first movement of *Symphony in C*, Neary in *Four Temperaments* and *Ballet Imperial*, Farrell's finally achieved mastery of the extraordinarily difficult lead in *Ballet Imperial*, her enchanting dancing in *Liebesliedewalzer*, Kent and Villella in *Bugaku*, Villella's *Tarantella*—to mention only a few of the great moments.

It is a measure of the independent vitality of Fonteyn and Nureyev that they can thrive in the arid climate of the Royal Ballet. Looking at Beriosova's *Swan Lake* and wondering why it was such a bore though also so remarkably secure, so undoubtedly "in the grand tradition," I thought of Antoinette Sibley's role in *The Dream* and realized what it must be like to dance in such a company. Sibley, Seymour, Page and Park are all getting to be as good as they can be at what they themselves can accomplish: security, finish, taste. They are lovely but not very interesting dancers, nor are they very likely to become more interesting, and the role of Titania, or that of Juliet, helps explain why: such roles can never help a dancer develop a new dimension in her technique or personality that would make her a more beautiful and exciting person to watch. And the Royal Ballet has lived for years in this desert. Fonteyn survived through her unique gift for intense concentration. Actually you can see how this works more easily now, when her powers are diminishing. During most of the *Giselle* I saw she was saving herself, and was only uninterestingly lovely; suddenly toward the end she was able to summon up and concentrate her energy, and it was as if a current had been switched on. She *looked* the same, in a sense, just as natural and simple as ever, but you were electrified by her intensity—all the more remarkable because the miracle happened during those last romantically light and airy lifts.

Her partner was of course responsible for some of this effect. Nureyev is the greatest male dancer I have seen. You notice first the body in itself, inevitably expressive in its very proportions, so that he makes the ordinary vocabulary of classic ballet (the separation of the legs in a leap, for instance) extraordinarily *visible*; there is his dazzling virtuosity when he is at his best; there is, above all, the dramatic power which brings the noble fantasy world of the classics to life as no other dancer has been able to. All this adds up to greatness beyond question. The questions that have nevertheless developed have been of two kinds. There is the inside-dopester kind that developed about Toscanini: how can the conductor whom even the man in the street calls the world's greatest actually be the world's greatest? It must all

be publicity. The other kind of question is trickier: it has been suggested that Nureyev's odd intensity strikes a jarring note in the quiet Royal Ballet style. I have already made clear the degree of my interest in that style, but the fact is that Nureyev actually fits into it very well. He doesn't *disappear* into it, but I go to *Swan Lake* to see a prince, not a well-behaved zero. It is true that Nureyev's dancing comes recklessly close to the borderline between high style and absurdity. But he usually keeps on the right side of the line, and then his audacity contrasts, and collaborates, most beautifully with Fonteyn's naturalness. At the beginning of the second act adagio of *Swan Lake*, for instance, he hovers over Fonteyn with an intensity that doesn't draw attention from her but instead passes into her like a charge that makes her quiet beauty exactly the object of adoration, his and ours, that the ballet wants as its meaning. Whether this highly temperamental artist will continue to be content thus to serve the meaning of the great classics is of course another question; whether he should be is still another. I wish he had a Balanchine to guide him.

Robert Garis



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CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

THE F-111

An Interview with James Rosenquist by
G. R. Swenson

Pop Art is a big commodity in New York, and one recent example at the Leo Castelli Gallery was literally big, in both size and price. James Rosenquist's painting, called *F-111* after the new Air Force fighter-bomber, is eighty-five feet long and ten feet high. Pop Art collector Robert Scull bought the fifty-one panel picture for a reported \$60,000.

F-111 covered all four walls of the gallery, making four right-angle turns. It was on loan to the Jewish Museum in New York when this interview was taped, in front of the picture, and though the museum has one of the longest walls available for display purposes, it was still necessary to make one corner turn. Whether or not its owner can eventually find room to house the painting is questionable. But meanwhile the painting will go on a European tour, beginning at the Modern Museum in Stockholm this September.

Monumentality may be impossible in an age of built-in obsolescence—the artist himself tends to think of the painting more as a souvenir than a monument (and of the plane itself as a bitterly ironic birthday cake). But Rosenquist's intentions are clearly equal to the dimensions of the picture. I first asked him, "What is the F-111?"

ROSENQUIST: It is the newest, latest fighter-bomber at this time, 1965.

This first of its type cost many million dollars. People are planning their lives through work on this bomber, in Texas or Long Island. A man has a contract from the company making the bomber, and

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he plans his third automobile and his fifth child because he is a technician and has work for the next couple of years. Then the original idea is expanded, another thing is invented; and the plane already seems obsolete. The prime force of this thing has been to keep people working, an economic tool; but behind it, this is a war machine.

SWENSON: What about the man who makes the F-111?

ROSENQUIST: He is just misguided. Masses of people are being snagged into a life and then continue that life, being enticed a little bit more and a little bit more in the wrong direction.

SWENSON: What have you tried to do in this painting?

ROSENQUIST: I think of it like a beam at the airport. A man in an airplane approaching a beam at the airport, he may fly twenty or thirty miles laterally, out of the exact way, but he continues to be on the beam. As he approaches closer to what he wants, or to the airport, he can be less divergent because the beam is a little narrower, maybe only one or two miles out of the way, and less and less until when he gets right on it; then he'll be there.

The ambience of the painting is involved with people who are all going toward a similar thing. All the ideas in the whole picture are very divergent, but I think they all seem to go toward some basic meaning. They're divergent so it's allowable to have orange spaghetti, cake, light bulbs, flowers . . .

SWENSON: Going toward what?

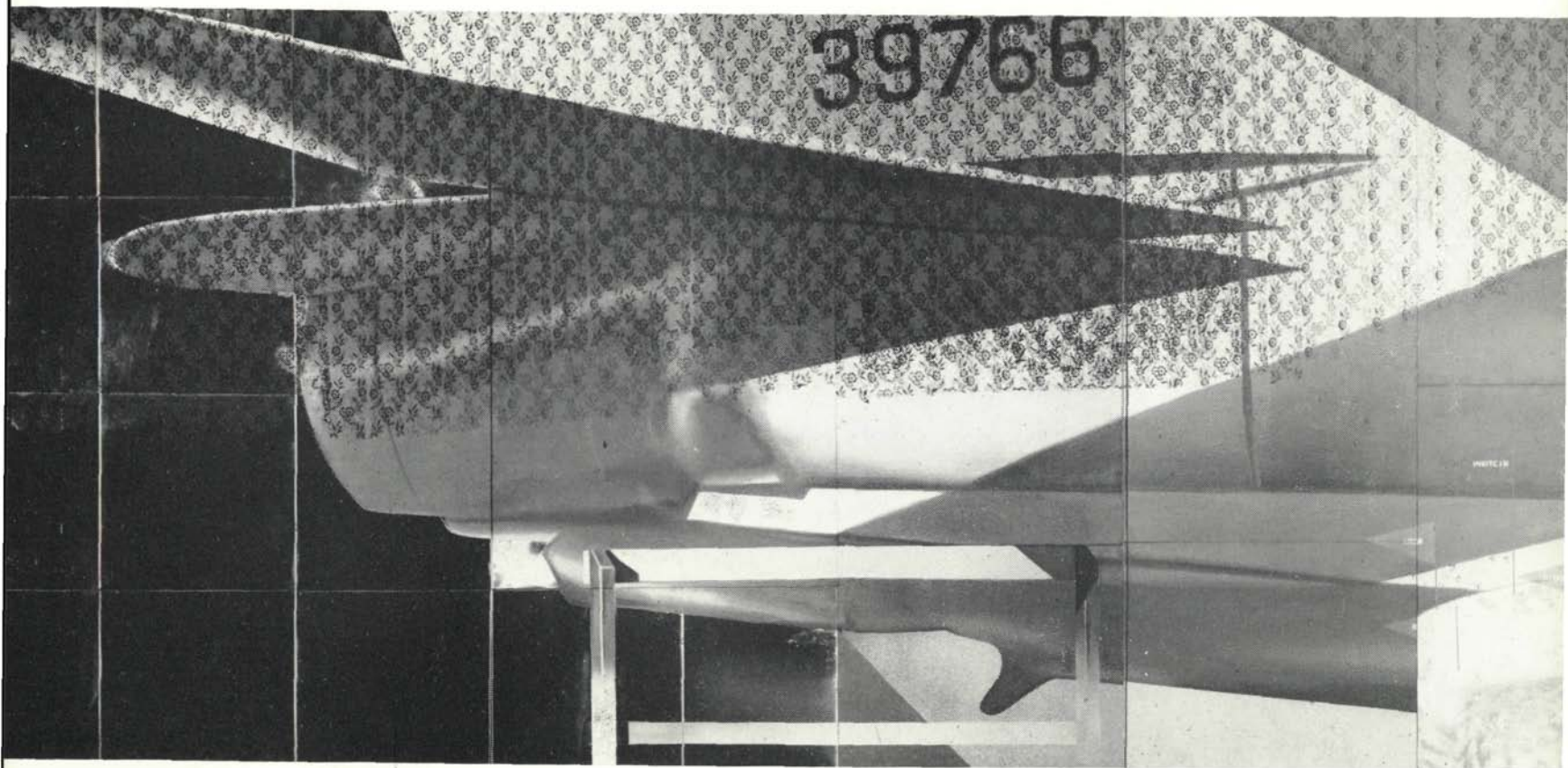
ROSENQUIST: Some blinding light, like a bug hitting a light bulb.

I think of the picture as being shoveled into a boiler. The picture is my personal reaction as an individual to the heavy ideas of mass media and communication and to other ideas that affect artists. I gather myself up to do something in a specific time, to produce something that could be exposed as a human idea of the extreme acceleration of feelings. The way technology appears to me now is that to take a stance—in a painting, for example—on some human qualities seems to be taking a stance on a conveyor belt: the minute you take a position on a question or on an idea, then the acceleration of technology, plus other things, will in a short time already have moved you down the conveyor belt. The painting is like a sacrifice from my side of the idea to the other side of society.

I can only hope to grasp things with the aid of a companion like an IBM machine. I would try to inject the humanity into the IBM machine; and myself and it, this extreme tool, would go forward.

I hope to do things in spite of my own fallacies,

a. "F-111" →



"F-111." By James Rosenquist.
Oil on Canvas: 10' x 86'. Collection of Mr. & Mrs. Robert C. Scull. Burckhardt Photo Credit

b. "F-111" (cont.) →

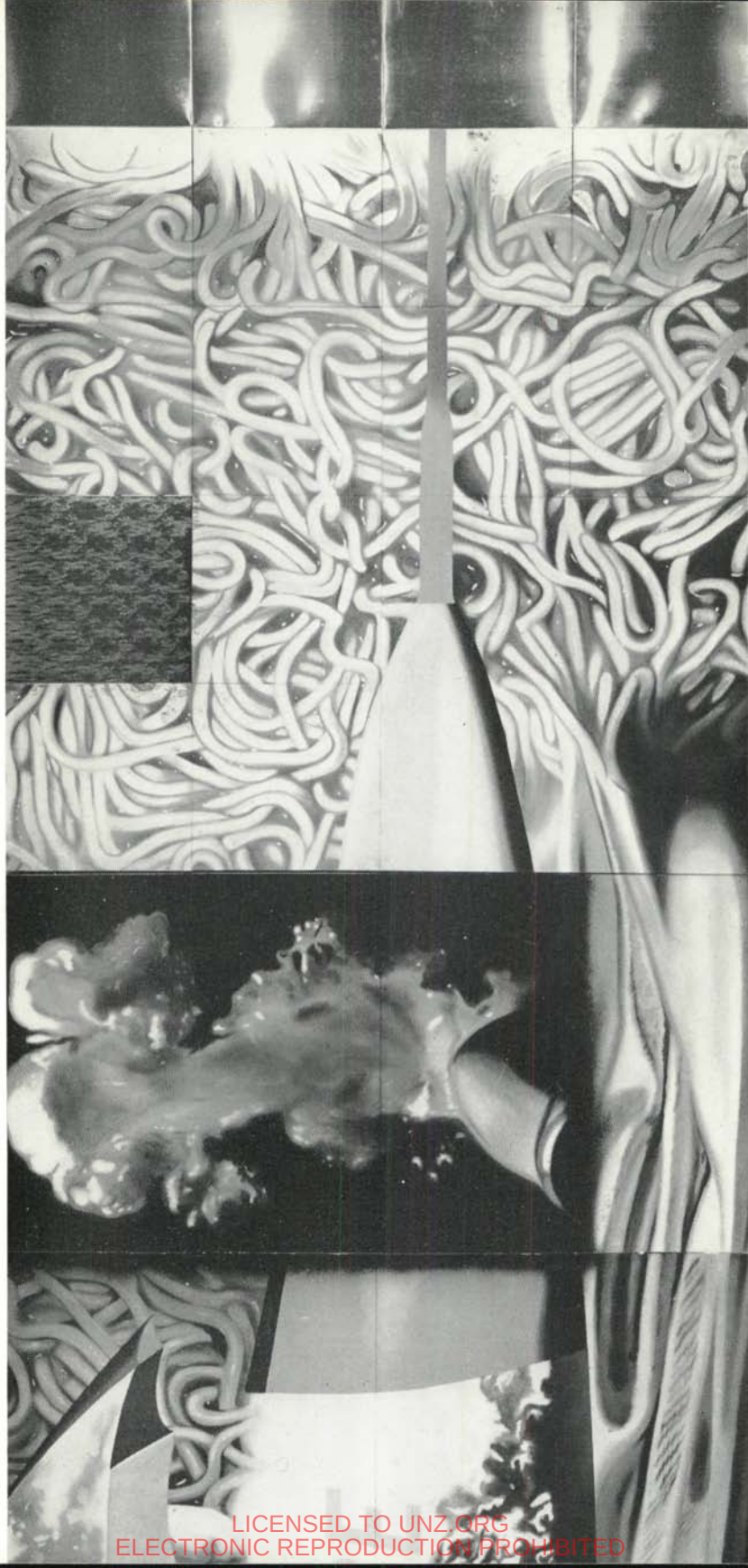


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c. "F-111" (cont.) →



d. "F-111" (cont.)



If a company or institution is using people like digits and massing them in schools of learning toward appreciating new ideas and new inventions, I react to that and try to pose a problem to think in terms of humanity again. So this picture is partial, incomplete maybe, but a fragment I am expending into the boiler.

SWENSON: In 1961 it seemed that you were adopting techniques and styles that were not your own but those of sign painters, professional and almost objective techniques. That had the aspect of anti-style; yet *Time* magazine recently referred to "Rosenquist's precise, realistic style."

ROSENQUIST: Well, the style I use was gained by doing outdoor commercial work as hard and as fast as I could. My techniques for me are still anti-style. I have an idea what I want to do, what it will look like when I want it finished—in between is just a hell of a lot of work.

When they say the Rosenquist style is very precise, maybe they just know that painting style as they know it is going out of style. Ways of accomplishing things are extended to different generations in oblique places. Billboard painting techniques are much like Mexican muralist techniques. Few people extend themselves in it at the time because it is not very much considered.

SWENSON: You worried some about the painting for the New York State pavilion at the World's Fair, that it would be dwarfed by some hundred-foot bride on the Kodak building. Is there any relationship between that painting and the size of the *F-111*?

ROSENQUIST: The picture at the World's Fair had a relation to the rest of the landscape, the huge buildings, huge pink Kodacolor photographs. That painting was exposed to other things of large scale and had to exist on some other terms than those I usually deal with.

The *F-111* was enclosed—four walls of a room in a gallery. My idea was to make an extension of ways of showing art in a gallery, instead of showing single pictures with wall space that usually gives your eye a relief. In this picture, because it did seal up all the walls, I could set the dial and put in the stops and rests for the person's eye in the whole room instead of allowing the eye to wander and think in an empty space. You couldn't shut it out, so I could set the rests.

SWENSON: Put in relief?

ROSENQUIST: Such as a light sky-blue area, which I've always felt as a relief. Or the one empty wall space with the missing canvas.

At first the missing panel was just to expose nature, that is,

the wall wherever it was hung; and from there of course would be extended the rest of the space wherever it was exhibited. In the gallery the painting was a cube or a box where the only area left on the walls was the "missing" panel. At one time I planned to hang a plexiglass panel over it: you would look through it and still be exposed to the wall.

SWENSON: Would you fill in some background on each of the images, beginning at the left?

ROSENQUIST: I used those same wallpaper roller patterns in 1962 on a painting called *Silver Skies*. I saw the pattern in an elevator lobby and thought of a solid atmosphere; you walk outside of your apartment into what used to be open air and all of a sudden feel that it has become solid with radioactivity and other undesirable elements. So I used a wallpaper roller with hard artificial flowers to hang in the atmosphere like a veil. In the panel at the other end, at the right side of the painting, I tried aluminum flowers on an aluminum panel to give a softer visual effect.

SWENSON: What about the aluminum panels on either end?

ROSENQUIST: People came into the gallery and immediately they'd say, "It's a picture of a jet plane painted on aluminum panels." People thought the ends were simply panels that hadn't been painted, and that the rest of the picture was on aluminum. The physical feeling that gave, the feeling of metal, is something different from canvas, a brittle feeling. The picture is mostly painted on canvas, but I think I achieved that brittle feeling with an economy—at least for a few people.

Originally the picture was an idea of fragments of vision being sold, incompleated fragments; there were about fifty-one panels in the picture. With one of them on your wall, you could feel something of a nostalgia, that it was incomplete and therefore romantic. That has to do with the idea of the man now collecting, a person buying a recording of the time or history. He could collect it like a fragment of architecture from a building on Sixth Avenue and Fifty-second Street; the fragment even now or at least in the near future may be just a vacant aluminum panel whereas in an earlier period it might have been a fancy cornice or something seemingly more human.

Years ago when a man watched traffic going up and down Sixth Avenue, the traffic would be horses and there would be a pulsing, muscular motion to the speed on the avenue. Now what he sees may be just a glimmer, a flash of static movement; and that idea of nature brings a strange, for me even now, a strange idea of what

art may become, like a fragment of this painting which is just an aluminum panel.

SWENSON: It might have been better, closer to your intention, if it had been sold piece by piece.

ROSENQUIST: Yes.

SWENSON: Then what would have happened to the picture?

ROSENQUIST: I don't know exactly. I wanted to relate the idea of the new man, the new person who appreciates things, to this painting. It would be to give the idea to people of collecting fragments of vision. One piece of this painting would have been a fragment of a machine the collector was already mixed up with, involved in whether he knew it or not. The person has already bought these airplanes by paying income taxes or being part of the community and the economy. The present men participate in the world whether it's good or not and they may physically have bought parts of what this image represents many times.

Then anyone interested in buying a blank part of this, knowingly or unknowingly—that's the joke—he would think he is buying art and, after all, he would just be buying a thing that paralleled part of the life he lives. Even though this picture was sold in one chunk, I think the original intention is still clear. The picture is in parts.

SWENSON: If someone bought one of these panels, he would be buying a souvenir, of the painting, of the F-111, of the time?

ROSENQUIST: Yes.

SWENSON: To get back to the images, what about the runner's hurdle?

ROSENQUIST: At the gallery the hurdle was presented in two perpendicular halves because it came at the corner of the room. The hurdle was broken right down the center. On the left are a couple of aluminum panels so that the right side, which is superimposed on painted areas, reflected around the corner into the aluminum and it appeared that there was another piece of the hurdle. In the gallery it looked as if a runner would have to jump a triangular hurdle, or one with several alternatives, but they were blind alternatives because the hurdle was in a corner. The runner seemed to hurdle himself into a corner.

SWENSON: The angel food cake?

ROSENQUIST: It's foodstuff. The small flags planted on it show the elements in the cake, like protein and iron and riboflavin—food energy. There is also a shaft that goes in the middle of the cake that is from the core or mold used to bake those cakes. I always remember it as some kind of abyss, this big hole in the middle of the

cake. The flags also mean flaming candles, like on a birthday cake, of age and time, and flags being planted and staking out areas in life, like food, being eaten for energy. Actually the F-111, the plane itself, could be a giant birthday cake lying on a truck for a parade or something—it has even been used like that—but it was developed as a horrible killer.

SWENSON: And the tire?

ROSENQUIST: The tire is a crown, a celebration of the town and country winter tire. The design, magnified, appears regal. I'd never thought of what rubber tires or wheels meant to me, and I looked at the tire tread and it seemed very strong and cruel or at least very, very visual. It also looked like it was rising up, like a crown, and so I used the image on top of the cake that way. And of course the two images have similar shapes.

SWENSON: And those three light bulbs?

ROSENQUIST: Yes, in pink, yellow and blue, which are the three basic colors of the spectrum. In that area of the picture they allowed me to try experiments in color and scale that I could not have tried in another painting in a smaller size. That huge area allowed me to paint with regular artist's oil paint, the pink-grey and yellow-grey and blue-grey, on top of a fluorescent background. The dark red fluorescent paint appears to be lighter than the three light bulbs but the paint in the three light bulbs lets you get the idea that the bulbs are glowing, but not that they are turned on. It seemed to be like force against force.

The broken one is not broken the way a light bulb would break, but more like an egg would crack.

The spaghetti just on the right, with the fork, has been painted orange with artist's oil color; then a transparent fluorescent dark red color has been spread on top of the whole area, to give it a general tone change, like a glaze.

SWENSON: The girl under the hairdryer?

ROSENQUIST: In the gallery she seemed very crucial; everyone looked at her because they faced her when they went into the room. Here at the Jewish museum it isn't so prominent and I like it better. I thought of taking the face out many times, but then the whole painting would be closer to what is historically the look of abstract painting. I didn't think the face related to earlier painting.

The little girl is *the* female form in the picture. It is like someone having her hair dried out on the lawn, in Texas or Long Island.

Painting the grass in Day-Glo green colors is like the change of nature in relation to the new look of the landscape.

SWENSON: Next there is an umbrella superimposed over an atom bomb blast. Is that about fallout?

ROSENQUIST: I suppose the umbrella could be something about fallout, but for me it's like someone raising his umbrella or raising his window in the morning, looking out the window and seeing a bright red and yellow atomic bomb blast, something like a cherry blossom, a beautiful view of an atomic blast.

When I was working in Times Square and painting signboards the workmen joked around and said the super center of the atomic target was around Canal Street and Broadway. That's where the rockets were aimed from Russia; and these guys, the old-timers would say, "Well, I'm not worried. At least we'll have a nice view right up here against the wall."

To me it's now a generation removed, the post-Beat young people. They're not afraid of an atomic war and think that sort of attitude is passé, that it won't occur. The Beat people, like Kerouac and Robert Frank, Dick Bellamy, Ginsberg and Corso, their first sensibility was of it being used immediately and they were hit by the idea of it, they were shocked and sort of threatened. Now the younger people are blasé and don't think it can happen. So this is a restatement of that Beat idea, but in full color.

The umbrella is friendlier than having to do with fallout. It's an aperture for a view. The rod holding up the umbrella goes right down the middle of the explosion like something being saved, the center of something else at the same time. The umbrella is realistic, it's a realistic vision, with frost or snow on top of it. The blue in the umbrella is its own color, not a Surrealistic piece of sky. It's a beach umbrella that was left up in the winter.

Then next, that's an underwater swimmer wearing a helmet with an air bubble above his head, an exhaust air bubble that's related to the breath of the atomic bomb. His "gulp!" of breath is like the "gulp!" of the explosion. It's an unnatural force, man-made.

I heard a story that when a huge number of bombers hit in Vietnam, and burned up many square miles of forest, then the exhaust of the heat and air pressure of the fire created an artificial storm and it started raining and helped put the fire out. The natives thought that something must be on their side; they thought it was a natural rain that put the fire out but it was actually a man-made change in the atmosphere.

SWENSON: What is the blanket-like form at the bottom of the picture?

ROSENQUIST: It is a huge arabesque, a huge fold. I painted it as a fold of aluminum material, an image of aluminum cloth. It appears soft, like a blanket.

It reminds me of a painter's drop cloth, finishing up the bottom of the painting, hanging under the painting out onto the floor, catching the drops and residue of his paint. That's the nature from the artist's brush. The idea—his art—is on the wall; the junk or stuff of paint on the floor is nature, and something else. The artist is like a samurai; he selects something, and his art is what the artist says it is, it's not something else. The shiny grey arabesque is an extension of the relation between the painter and nature which could be a drop cloth or paint quality.

Then the arabesque changes into foodstuff, into spaghetti, and from its grey color into orange. The painting has its ending in an orange field, the image of spaghetti.

SWENSON: Some critics have said you have a love of size for its own sake. Do you?

ROSENQUIST: No.

SWENSON: What about originality for its own sake?

ROSENQUIST: Not conscious of it—and not of art for its own sake.

I do it for myself, but there is the possibility that it could appeal to all kinds of people, that it could snag someone into looking. I thought maybe if paintings were just done very well, the person could grasp something in one way immediately, the look of it, visually. After a person has reached a certain thing, after he has gone through it, then he could discard it.

The fault of this picture may be that it lets someone get too far off the beam; one person said that I had a love for the billboard—and damnit, I don't love it at all.

SWENSON: You were quoted in the *Times* as saying that you wanted this painting to be an antidote to the new devices that affect the ethics of the human being. . . .

ROSENQUIST: Yes. I hope this picture is a quantity that will release the idea of the new devices; my idea is that a man will turn to subversion if he even hears a rumor that a lie detector will be used on him in the normal course of business. What would happen if a major corporation decided to use all the new devices available to them? I'm sure the hint of this is starting to change people's ethics.

I said this picture was an antidote. To accumulate an antidote

is to shift gears, to get to an area where an artist can be an effect. To get to another strata—anti-style could be a lever.

SWENSON: You once said to me that in your paintings you were trying to get at a quality, even more mysterious than death.

ROSENQUIST: Yes. What I meant was that ideas can have more of a mysterious effect than someone simply being eradicated. The effect on someone, the reality of something, can be more horrible and more mysterious than someone being totally destroyed. Having every memory obliterated—that can be more horrible than being shot.

SWENSON: But you're not saying that you are anti-machine because you are anti-style, or are you?

ROSENQUIST: Machines are exciting. I'm not anti-machine, but some machines seemingly can't be dealt with, they're so sophisticated. I feel we can be tripped up by the need to make a new ethic, instead of being very careful. We think we have solved something with the machine and actually we've tripped up human nature.

SWENSON: You were also quoted as saying that you were involved with the United States and the position of a person trying to be an artist. Were you suggesting by this that people ought to learn painting rather than how to run IBM machines or make F-111s?

ROSENQUIST: No. I'm amazed by—when I think of technology, I think of it being fantastic. I *would* want them to stop making F-111s because it's a war industry; but I wouldn't try to get a technologist to become an artist.

SWENSON: You don't see any war between technology and art?

ROSENQUIST: No. I see a closer tie with technology and art and a new curiosity about new methods of communication coming from all sides. The present position of an artist seems to be a person who offers up a gift, an antidote to something, a small relief to a heavy atmosphere. A person looking at it may say, "That's beautiful, amazing, fantastic, a nice thing." Artists seem to offer up their things with very much humility and graciousness while society now and the economy seem to be very rambunctious. The stance of the artists now, compared with the world and the ideas in society, does not seem to equate; they don't relate except as an artist offering up something as a small gift. So the idea of this picture was to do an extravagance, something that wouldn't simply be offered as a relief.

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ARGUMENTS

THE INTERPRETATION OF DREAMS

An American Dream has been nearly as widely panned as it has been widely reviewed, but in how many cases has it really been read, or, to put the best construction on it, read in book form rather than in the *Esquire* installments? A dazzling performance, a recklessly generous yet disciplined exercise in self-exposure and self-invention, Mailer's latest novel has had the further distinction of provoking a quaint resurgence of neoclassical canons of taste. The strategy of attack has naturally been not entirely ineffective. It can't, after all, be denied that the novel sins continuously against the rules of propriety and verisimilitude, and the clarities of *bon sens*. So that by ignoring what Mailer has done, his attackers have been able to have quite a time of it showing what he should have done. Elizabeth Hardwick, in PR, announced that *An American Dream* is "a very dirty book—dirty and extremely ugly." And if we look for something closer to a reasoned argument in her review, we find the curious logic that the story "is artless, unmysterious and so there is no pain in it, no triumphant cruelty or instructive evil." It's mysterious to *me* why mystery is necessary for pain, why cruelty should be triumphant (over what? exactly how?) or evil instructive (to make the reader a "better person"?), or indeed what relevance such ideas about the novel have in what purports to be an account of *this* novel. Tom Wolfe, treating us once again to his special blend of *Wham-bang!* interjections and Comp. Lit. pedantry, thinks that Rojack is killed off with too much thinking in the first fourteen and a half pages of the novel, complains of "unreal dialogue," but finally concedes that Mailer may one day be able to "climb into the same ring as James M. Cain." For Joseph Epstein, *An American Dream*, "on any level one chooses to read it" (?), is "confused and silly," and (shades of English 223: Nineteenth-Century Realistic Fiction) he condemns Mailer for being "more interested in the novel as a spectacle than as a

convincing representation of life, more concerned with projecting personal fantasies than creating verisimilitude."

Philip Rahv, writing in the *New York Review of Books*, manages both to capture Miss Hardwick's moralistic tone (he complains of Rojack's being freed, by plot manipulation, "from paying any sort of price for what he has done") and to echo Mr. Epstein's notions of what a novel is supposed to do (the story lacks "verisimilitude, even in the most literal sense.") Finally, in a plot summary apparently designed to show the uselessness of attempting a critical evaluation of this "dreadful novel," Stanley Edgar Hyman unwittingly demonstrates some of Mailer's marvelous humor and indifference to plot, and shows in addition his own inability to cope with the difficulty of Mailer's language and especially the exuberant inventiveness of his similes. Unfortunately, Mailer's defenders—with the notable exception of Richard Poirier in *Commentary*—seem as anxious as his detractors to get away from the book. John Aldrich, in an apocalyptic reading for *Life* which Mailer had printed in PR to offset Miss Hardwick's scolding comments, speaks of *An American Dream* as "a devil's encyclopedia of our secret visions and desires, an American dream or nightmare"; Mailer, we are told, has created "an image of our time which will undoubtedly stand as authoritative for this generation." And Conrad Knickerbocker, adopting that flattening perspective from which the *Times* reassures its readers that good books, good plays and good movies are never special or particular but are always speaking to all of us about all our problems, praises Mailer for searching for something called "the mana, that magics, submerged and hideous, that move the age."

But the seriousness of *An American Dream* involves a denial of certain kinds of novelistic seriousness, of social probability and relevance, as well as of so-called intellectual depth. It is an intensely private novel, and one key to what has offended or puzzled the reviewers is probably in the way Mailer allows his hero to treat himself, in that peculiar blend of self-concentration and self-deprecation which, in fact, largely accounts for the originality of his language. The expectations of a political novel which might be set up by the joke that begins the story are rapidly destroyed. Mailer in *An American Dream* is somewhat like Balzac in his attitudes toward social maneuvering and power: he seems just as naïvely melodramatic in his notion of what goes on at the top, and the images of political power in both novelists should be immediately recognizable as private mythologies expressing private obsessions and dreams of power ideally demonic. Both are impatient with the specific strategies for gaining and keeping power, as distinct

from the excitement of exercising it. Barney Kelly, like Vautrin, is a spooky physical presence who overwhelms Rojack with a wild assortment of suffocating smells, just as Vautrin paralyzes Rastignac and Lucien de Rubempré by shooting bullet-like particles of his fantastic will through the air and into the soft soil of their more passive minds. Mailer, like Balzac, is better at suggesting some of the sexual impulses that perhaps account for the enjoyment of power than at detailing the more prosaic and conscious calculations that pave the way to it. Kelly's success story is brashly improbable (he possessed the stock market by telepathy); what he really wants to talk about with Rojack is the frightening thrill of incest with Bess and her daughter, and later with Deborah, and the most impressive demonstration of his power is in the extraordinary passage where he invites Rojack to "get shitty" with him and Ruta. In his wish to have the three of them "pitch and tear and squat and kick, swill and grovel on the Lucchese bed, fuck until our eyes were out, bury the ghost of Deborah by gorging on her corpse," in his brutal, simultaneous appeal to impulses of anality, homosexuality, necrophilia and cannibalism, the magic of his power is made marvelously concrete by the energy of his indulgence in bodily fantasies, an energy so great that Rojack begins to share the fantasies, to feel "unfamiliar desires."

It is power of this sort that both fascinates and terrifies Rojack; the murder of Deborah and, perhaps more significantly, the story of that murder are his attempts to free himself from it. If Rojack responds like an electric coil to multitudinous "invasions" from the outside world, it is because he is pathologically convinced that what he calls his "center" may be stolen from him at any moment, at the same time that he feeds on this sense of constant threat as a kind of substitute for a sense of self. This fantasy provides what could be called the psychological theme, or obsession, of the novel, and it may or may not, incidentally, throw some light on what has often seemed to be Mailer's facile talent for making himself obnoxious in public. When, for example, we read that Rojack, instead of feeling relief at being left alone for a few moments in the police station, yearns for Roberts' return, "much as if that merciless lack of charity which I had come to depend on in Deborah (as a keel to ballast the empty dread of my stomach) was now provided by the detective," we may at least wonder to what extent Mailer's own sense of himself has depended on his ability to provoke attack. *An American Dream*, at any rate, records a dramatic and exhilarating struggle with that "empty dread," an attempt to fight the vampire complex that makes Rojack both fear and need a world of

devouring bitches, telepathic powers and omnipotent smells. The novel, for all its apparently complacent acceptance of magic, is a continuous attack against magic, that is, an attack against fantasies of the self as both all powerful and totally vulnerable.

The strategy of resistance is, inevitably, literary, and the power of *An American Dream* is in its demonstration of verbal tactics which finally make what I have called the psychological theme irrelevant. The "courage" which is made so much of in the novel, and which the reviewers have found lamentably banal as a moral philosophy, is much more of a brilliant and difficult trick than a virtue in the ordinary sense. While it is often merely the bravery born of a superstitious compulsion, as when Rojack forces himself to walk along the parapet of Kelly's terrace, it involves, more profoundly, a willingness to entertain the most extravagant fantasies and hallucinations in order to change their affective coefficient. By taking the risk of abandoning himself to the fantastic suggestiveness of every person, every object, every smell encountered during the thirty-two hours he writes about, Rojack discovers fantasy as a source of imaginative richness in himself instead of fearing it as an ominous signal from mysterious, external powers. He moves, in other words, from fantasy as a psychological illusion about the world to the use of fantasy as a somewhat self-conscious but exuberant display of his own inventive powers. Every menace becomes the occasion for a verbal performance, and his fluttering nervousness about being deprived of his "center" is rather humorously belied by the incredibly dense and diversified self which his language reveals and creates. Nothing in the book (not even Rojack's moving attempt to know love as something sane and decent with Cherry) except the virtuosity of the writing itself indicates a way out of the nightmare Rojack seems to be telling. The nightmare would be nothing more than a nasty story if Mailer, like his critics, had allowed it to separate itself from the virtuosity, from, especially, the metaphorical exuberance which is, I think, a way of mocking and outdoing the dangerous inventiveness of a magic-ridden world. This means, of course, that the *playfulness* of the novel is by no means a frivolous attitude toward "dirty" or "ugly" events, but rather the natural tone of a man for whom events have become strictly literary-novelistic situations to be freely exploited for the sake of a certain style and the self-enjoyment it perhaps unexpectedly provides.

It is, then, irrelevant to complain of improbable situations or unreal dialogue in *An American Dream*. Rojack's playfulness, his verbal exuberance, is the sign of a confident use of power, and it

involves an occasionally reckless indifference to the probability of his own experience. The telling of his story becomes *Rojack's* invention as well as Mailer's once his life confronts him as choices to be made about language and novelistic form. The plot of *An American Dream* is, therefore, nothing more than a mode of Rojack's inventive exuberance, and, while it is perhaps understandable that the anecdotal aspect of fiction should trick us most easily into confusions between art and life, we should be admiring the power of extravagance in Rojack's tall story instead of upholding the faded banner of verisimilitude. Rojack's experience is largely a pretext for trying his hand at different ways of telling a story: making love to Ruta is a calculated allegory of good and evil, a parody of literary struggles between the Lord and the Devil, but the scene in the police station and Rojack's telephone calls are masterful exercises in the art of realistic dialogue and psychological detail. And much of the novel's humor is in the unexpected shifts from one kind of writing to another: the conversation with Dr. Tharchman moves from intricate, understated satire to an exaggerated display of *humour noir*, and some of the suspense of a spy story is brought in just long enough to make us feel the greater importance of what is more like a ghost story.

This free play of virtuosity in the narrative structure of *An American Dream* also characterizes Rojack's similes, which the reviewers have pounced on with a comical solemnity about stylistic propriety. Mr. Hyman, in his outraged enumeration of the similes he hates most, is only the most hilarious example of all those readers who have declared with absolute seriousness that they have never thought of a pigeon's breast when touching the trigger of a gun, or had an orgasm "fierce as a demon in the eyes of a bright golden child." Novelists themselves have, of course, been known to isolate their metaphors from their style, to test each one for its individual "rightness" or "objective" validity. Flaubert's maniacal search for a perfect equivalence between image and a preexistent "subject" (a fear of style disguised as an idolatry of style) probably accounts, to some degree, for his leaden metaphors and the clumsiness of his rhythms. But Mailer in *An American Dream*, unlike Flaubert, never uses metaphor for the purpose of arresting our attention, of making us stop to admire a tiny verbal island, an exquisite *trouvaille*. Rojack's similes *make* a self of enormous, even fantastic imaginative range, and their power lies in a kind of dialectical reference to, and denial of characters and events in the novel. They change the story, as it is being told, into a challenge to the resources of fantasy; their complexity is not in their farfetched

nature, but lies rather in the dramatic burden they carry of transforming oppressive experience into tokens of stylistic play. The plausibility of Rojack's similes is irrelevant; what matters is that he makes us feel his associations as spontaneous, irresistible fantasies, and that we accept his most elaborate verbal constructions as illustrating the elaborateness of immediacy rather than of development toward an idea. For no intellectual strategy could explain the humor or justify the casual difficulty of Rojack's style. It is, in a sense, his very absence of thought (an absence deplored by Mr. Epstein and by Granville Hicks) which creates Rojack's "system" of defense, his refusal to conceptualize sensation and to be reasonable about the accumulation of metaphor which makes of his writing an act of total responsiveness.

An American Dream is an impressively original work, but it shouldn't be necessary to point out that Mailer is not the first novelist to prefer to the conventions of social probability in fiction a more direct form of self-display. The illusion of distinctness between the narrator and the social world he is presumably observing and reporting on is only weakly maintained in Proust and in James's later novels, where we already sense a certain impatience with the mediation of fantasy into "objective" characters and events. In both James and Proust, what seems to be a fascination with the suggestiveness and self-inventive possibilities of language leads to some carelessness about novelistic situations, a tendency to allegorize the world as a rather transparent (rather than hidden) projection of the self. But most of Mailer's critics surely know about all this, and if we are to dismiss the possibility of a deliberate ganging-up on him for past offenses, the irrelevance of what has been said about *An American Dream* must perhaps be explained by the shock and resentment produced by a work that would force us to admit the self-indulgence, the particularity and even, in a certain sense, the irresponsibility of interesting art. Mailer's admirers are already hard at work making him responsible and relevant to all sorts of things, but to read *An American Dream* is, happily, to see the hopelessness of their good intentions. Nothing, after all, could be more typical of the marvelous lightness of imagination than to test, in the most scrupulous detail, the possibility of a grown-up love, built on tenderness and respect, with Cherry, and then to end the whole thing on the frivolous note of that charmingly nonsensical phone call to heaven.

Leo Bersani

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VARIETY

FRANKENSTEIN, OR THE NEW PROMETHEUS

The motion picture viewer who carries his obscure but still authentic taste for the sublime to the neighborhood theater, there to see the latest in an unending series of *Frankensteins*, participates in a Romantic terror now nearly one hundred and fifty years old. The terror is a familiar and a pleasing one, and few figures in contemporary mythology are as universally loved as Frankenstein's once pathetic monster, now a star beaconing from the abode of television, comic strips and the sweat-shirts of the young.

"Frankenstein," to most of us, is the name of a monster rather than of a monster's creator, for the common reader and the common viewer have worked together, in their apparent confusion, to create a myth soundly based on a central duality in Mary Shelley's novel.¹ As Richard Church and Muriel Spark were the first to record, the monster and his creator are the antithetical halves of a single being. Miss Spark states the antithesis too cleanly; for her, Victor Frankenstein represents the feelings, and his nameless creature the intellect. In her view, the monster has no emotion, and "what passes for emotion . . . are really intellectual passions arrived at through rational channels." Miss Spark carries this argument far enough to insist that the monster is asexual, and that he demands a bride from Frankenstein only for companionship, a conclusion evidently at variance with the novel's text.

The antithesis between the scientist and his creature in Frankenstein is a very complex one, and to be described more fully it must be placed in the larger context of Romantic literature and its characteristic myth-

1 Mary Shelley, second wife of Percy Bysshe Shelley and daughter of William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft, was 19 when she wrote the original *Frankenstein*.

ology. The shadow or double of the self is a constant conceptual image in Blake and Shelley, and a frequent image, more random and descriptive, in the other major Romantics, especially in Byron. In *Frankenstein*, it is the dominant and recurrent image, and accounts for much of the latent power the novel possesses.

Mary Shelley's husband was a divided being, as man and as poet, just as his friend Byron was, though in Shelley the split was more radical. *Frankenstein, or The Modern Prometheus* is the full title of Mrs. Shelley's novel, and while Victor Frankenstein is *not* Shelley (Clerval is rather more like the poet), the Modern Prometheus is a very apt term for Shelley or for Byron. Prometheus best suits the uses of Romantic poetry, for no other mythic figure has in him the full range of Romantic moral sensibility, and the full Romantic capacity for creation and destruction.

No Romantic writer employed the Prometheus archetype without a full awareness of its equivocal potentialities. The Prometheus of the ancients had been for the most part a spiritually reprehensible figure, though frequently a sympathetic one, both in terms of his dramatic situation and in his close alliance with mankind against the gods. But this alliance had been ruinous for man, in most versions of the myth, and the Titan's benevolence toward humanity was hardly sufficient recompense for the alienation of man from heaven that he had brought about. Both sides of Titanism are evident in earlier Christian references to the story. The same Prometheus who is taken as an analogue of the crucified Christ is regarded also as a type of Lucifer, a son of light justly cast out by an offended heaven.

In the Romantic readings of Milton's *Paradise Lost* (and *Frankenstein* is implicitly one such reading), this double identity of Prometheus is a vital element. Blake, whose mythic revolutionary named Orc is another version of Prometheus, saw Milton's Satan as a Prometheus gone wrong, as desire restrained until it became only the shadow of desire, a diminished double of creative energy. Shelley went further in judging Milton's Satan as an imperfect Prometheus, inadequate because his mixture of heroic and base qualities engendered in the reader's mind a "pernicious casuistry" inimical to the spirit of art.

Blake, more systematic a poet than Shelley, worked out an antithesis between symbolic figures he named Spectre and Emanation, the shadow of desire and the total form of desire, respectively. A reader of *Frankenstein*, recalling the novel's extraordinary conclusion with its scenes of obsessional pursuit through the Arctic wastes, can recognize the same imagery applied to a similar symbolic situation in Blake's lyric on the strife of Spectre and Emanation:

*My Spectre around me night and day
Like a Wild beast guards my way.
My Emanation far within
Weeps incessantly for my Sin.*

*A Fathomless and boundless deep,
There we wander, there we weep;
On the hungry craving wind
My Spectre follows thee behind.*

*He scents thy footsteps in the snow,
Wheresoever thou dost go
Thro' the wintry hail and rain . . .*

Frankenstein's monster, tempting his revengeful creator on through a world of ice, is another Emanation pursued by a Spectre, with the enormous difference that he is an Emanation flawed, a nightmare of actuality, rather than a dream of desire.

Though abhorred rather than loved, the monster is the total form of Frankenstein's creative power, and is *more imaginative* than his creator. The monster is at once more intellectual *and* more emotional than his maker, indeed he excels Frankenstein as much (and in the same ways) as Milton's Adam excels Milton's God in *Paradise Lost*. The greatest paradox, and most astonishing achievement, of Mary Shelley's novel is that the monster is *more human* than his creator. This nameless being, as much a Modern Adam as his creator is a Modern Prometheus, is more lovable than his creator and more hateful, more to be pitied and more to be feared, and above all more able to give the attentive reader that shock of added consciousness which compels a heightened realization of the self. For, like Blake's Spectre and Emanation, or Shelley's Alastor and Epipsyche, Frankenstein and his monster are the solipsistic and generous halves of the one self. Frankenstein is the mind and emotions turned in upon themselves, and his creature is the mind and emotions turned imaginatively outward, seeking a greater humanization through a confrontation of other selves.

I am suggesting that what makes *Frankenstein* an important book, though it is only a strong, flawed, frequently clumsy novel is that it vividly projects a version of the Romantic mythology of the self, found, among other places, in Blake's *Book of Urizen*, Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* and Byron's *Manfred*. It lacks the sophistication and imaginative complexity of such works but precisely because of that *Frankenstein* affords a unique introduction to the archetypal world of the Romantics.

William Godwin, though a tendentious novelist, was a powerful one, and the prehistory of his daughter's novel begins in 1794 with his

best work of fiction, *Caleb Williams*. Godwin summarized the climactic (and harrowing) final third of his novel as a pattern of flight and pursuit, "the fugitive in perpetual apprehension of being overwhelmed with the worst calamities, and the pursuer, by his ingenuity and resources, keeping his victim in a state of the most fearful alarm." Mary Shelley brilliantly reverses this pattern in the final sequence of her novel, and she also takes from *Caleb Williams* her destructive theme of the monster's war against what Caleb Williams from his prison cell calls "the whole machinery of human society." Muriel Spark, pointing to Shelley's equivocal Preface to his wife's novel, argues that *Frankenstein* can be read as a reaction "against the rational-humanism of Godwin and Shelley." Certainly Shelley was worried lest the novel be taken as a warning against the inevitable moral consequences of an unchecked experimental Prometheanism and scientific materialism. The Preface insists that:

The opinions which naturally spring from the character and situation of the hero are by no means to be conceived as existing always in my own conviction; nor is any inference justly to be drawn from the following pages as prejudicing any philosophical doctrine of whatever kind.

There are two paradoxes at the center of Mrs. Shelley's novel, and each illuminates a dilemma of the Promethean imagination. The first is that Frankenstein *was* successful: he *did* create Natural Man, not as he was, but as the meliorists saw him. Indeed, Frankenstein did better than this, since his creature was more imaginative even than himself. Frankenstein's tragedy stems, not from his Promethean excess, but from his own moral error, his failure to love. He *abhorred his creature*, became terrified of it, and fled his responsibilities.

The second paradox is the more ironic. This disaster either would not have happened, or would not have mattered anyway, if Frankenstein had been an esthetically successful maker; a beautiful "monster," or even a passable one, would not have been a monster. The creature himself bitterly observes:

Shall I respect man when he contemns me? Let him live with me in the interchange of kindness; and, instead of injury, I would bestow every benefit upon him with tears of gratitude at his acceptance. But that cannot be; the human senses are insurmountable barriers to our union.

As the sensuous horror of his creature was no part of Victor Frankenstein's intention, it is worth noticing how this came about. It would not be unjust to characterize Victor Frankenstein, in his act of creation, as being momentarily a moral idiot. There is an indeliberate humor, to

which readers since 1945 are doubtless more sensitive than earlier ones, in the contrast between the enormity of the scientist's discovery, and the mundane emotions of the discoverer. Finding that "the minuteness of the parts" slows him down, he resolves to make his creature "about eight feet in height, and proportionably large." As he works on, he allows himself to dream that "a new species would bless me as its creator and source; many happy and excellent natures would owe their being to me." Yet he knows his is a "workshop of filthy creation," and he fails the fundamental test of his own creativity. When the "dull yellow eye" of his creature opens, this creator falls from the autonomy of a supreme artificer to the terror of a child of earth: "breathless horror and disgust filled my heart." He flees his responsibility, and sets in motion the events that will lead to his own Arctic immolation, a fit end for a being (rather like Lawrence's Gerald in *Women in Love*) who has never achieved a full sense of another's existence.

It is part of Mary Shelley's insight into her mythological theme that all the monster's victims are innocents. The monster not only refuses actively to slay his guilty creator; he *mourns* for him, though with the equivocal tribute of terming the scientist a "generous and self-devoted being." Frankenstein, the Modern Prometheus who has violated nature, receives his epitaph from the ruined second nature he has made, the God-abandoned, who consciously echoes the ruined Satan of *Paradise Lost*, and proclaims "Evil thenceforth became my good." It is imaginatively fitting that the greater and more interesting consciousness of the creature should survive his creator, for he alone in Mrs. Shelley's novel possesses character. Frankenstein, like Coleridge's Ancient Mariner, has no character in his own right; both figures win a claim to our attention only by their primordial crimes against original nature.

The monster is of course Mary Shelley's finest invention, and his narrative (Chapters XI through XVI) forms the highest achievement of the novel, more absorbing even than the magnificent and almost surrealistic pursuit of the climax. In an age so given to remarkable depictions of the dignity of natural man, an age including the shepherds and beggars of Wordsworth, Frankenstein's hapless creature stands out as a sublime embodiment of heroic pathos. Though Frankenstein lacks the moral imagination to understand him, the daemon's appeal is to what is most compassionate in us:

"Oh, Frankenstein, be not equitable to every other, and trample upon me alone, to whom thy justice, and even thy clemency and affection, is most due. Remember, that I am thy creature; *I ought to be thy Adam; but I am rather the fallen angel, whom thou drivest from joy for no misdeed.* Everywhere I see bliss,

from which I alone am irrevocably excluded. I was benevolent and good; misery made me a fiend. Make me happy, and I shall again be virtuous."

The passage I have italicized is the imaginative kernel of the novel, a reminder of the novel's epigraph:

*Did I request thee, Maker, from my clay
To mould me man? Did I solicit thee
From darkness to promote me?*

—*Paradise Lost*, Book X, 743-5

That desperate plangency of the fallen Adam becomes the characteristic accent of the daemon's lamentations, with the influence of Milton cunningly built into the novel's narrative by the happy device of Frankenstein's creature receiving his education through reading *Paradise Lost* "as a true history." Already doomed because his standards are human, which makes him an outcast even to himself, his Miltonic education completes his fatal growth in self-consciousness. His story, as told to his maker, follows a familiar Romantic pattern "of the progress of my intellect," as he puts it. His first pleasure after the dawn of consciousness comes through his wonder at seeing the moon rise. Caliban-like, he responds wonderfully to music, both natural and human, and his sensitivity to the natural world has the responsiveness of an incipient poet. His awakening to a first love for other beings, the inmates of the cottage he haunts, awakens him also to the great desolation of love rejected, when he attempts to reveal himself. His own duality of situation and character, caught between the states of Adam and Satan, Natural Man and his thwarted desire, is related by him directly to his reading of Milton's epic:

It moved every feeling of wonder and awe that the picture of an omnipotent God warring with his creatures was capable of exciting. I often referred the several situations, as their similarity struck me, to my own. Like Adam, I was apparently united by no link to any other being in existence; but his state was far different from mine in every other respect. He had come forth from the hands of God a perfect creature, happy and prosperous, guarded by the especial care of his Creator; he was allowed to converse with, and acquire knowledge from, beings of a superior nature: but I was wretched, helpless, and alone. Many times I considered Satan as the fitter emblem of my condition; for often, like him, when I viewed the bliss of my protectors, the bitter gall of envy rose within me.

From a despair this profound, no release is possible. Driven forth into an existence upon which "the cold stars shone in mockery," the daemon declares "everlasting war against the species," and enters upon

a fallen existence more terrible than the expelled Adam's. Echoing Milton, he asks the ironic question, "And now, with the world before me, whither should I bend my steps," to which the only possible answer is: toward his wretched Promethean creator.

If we stand back from Mary Shelley's novel, in order better to view its archetypal shape, we see it as the quest of a solitary and ravaged consciousness first for consolation, then for revenge, and finally for a self-destruction that will be apocalyptic, that will bring down the creator with his creature. Though Mary Shelley may not have intended it, her novel's prime theme is a necessary counterpoise to Prometheanism, for Prometheanism exalts the increase in consciousness despite all cost. Frankenstein breaks through the barrier that separates man from God, and apparently becomes the giver of life, but all he actually can give is death-in-life. The profound dejection endemic in Mary Shelley's novel is fundamental to the Romantic mythology of the self, for all Romantic horrors are diseases of excessive consciousness, of the self unable to bear the self. Kierkegaard remarks that Satan's despair is absolute, because Satan as pure spirit is pure consciousness, and for Satan (and all men in his predicament) every increase in consciousness is an increase in despair. Frankenstein's desperate creature attains the state of pure spirit through his extraordinary situation, and is racked by a consciousness in which every thought is a fresh disease.

A Romantic poet fought against self-consciousness through the strength of what he called imagination, a more than rational energy, by which thought could seek to heal itself. But Frankenstein's daemon, though he is in the archetypal situation of the Romantic Wanderer or Solitary, who sometimes was a poet, can win no release from his own story by telling it. His desperate desire for a mate is clearly an attempt to find a Shelleyan Epipsyche or Blakean Emanation for himself, a self within the self. But as he is the nightmare actualization of Frankenstein's desire, he is himself an emanation of Promethean yearnings, and his only double is his creator and denier.

When Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner* progressed from the purgatory of consciousness to his very minimal control of imagination, he failed to save himself. He remained in a cycle of remorse. But he at least became a salutary warning to others, and made of the Wedding Guest a wiser and a better man. Frankenstein's creature can help neither himself nor others, for he has no natural ground to which he can return. Romantic poets liked to return to the imagery of the ocean of life and immortality; in the eddying to and fro of the healing waters they could picture a hoped-for process of restoration, of a survival of consciousness despite all its agonies. Mary Shelley, with marvelous appropriateness,

brings her Romantic novel to a demonic conclusion in a world of ice. The frozen sea is the inevitable emblem for both the wretched daemon and his obsessed creator, but the daemon is allowed a final image of reversed Prometheanism. There is a heroism fully earned in the being who cries farewell in a claim of sad triumph: "I shall ascend my funeral pyre triumphantly, and exult in the agony of the torturing flames." Mary Shelley could not have known how dark a prophecy this consummation of consciousness would prove to be for the two great Promethean poets who were at her side during the summer of 1816, when her novel was conceived. Byron, writing his own epitaph at Missolonghi in 1824, and perhaps thinking back to having stood at Shelley's funeral pyre two years before, found an image similar to the daemon's, to sum up an exhausted existence:

*The fire that on my bosom preys
Is lone as some volcanic isle;
No torch is kindled at its blaze—
A funeral pile.*

The fire of increased consciousness stolen from heaven ends as an isolated volcano, cut off from other selves by an estranging sea. "The light of that conflagration will fade away; my ashes will be swept into the sea by the winds," is the exultant cry of Frankenstein's creature. A blaze at which no torch is kindled is Byron's self-image, but he ends his death poem on another note, the hope for a soldier's grave, which he found. There is no Promethean release, but release is perhaps not the burden of the literature of Romantic aspiration. There is something both Godwinian and Shelleyan about the final utterance of Victor Frankenstein, which is properly made to Walton, the failed Promethean, whose ship has just turned back. Though chastened, the Modern Prometheus ends with a last word true, not to his accomplishment, but to his desire:

"Farewell, Walton! Seek happiness in tranquility and avoid ambition, even if it be only the apparently innocent one of distinguishing yourself in science and discoveries. Yet why do I say this? I have myself been blasted in these hopes, yet another may succeed."

Shelley's Prometheus, crucified on his icy precipice, found his ultimate torment in a Fury's taunt: "And all best things are thus confused to ill." It seems a fitting summation for all the work done by Modern Prometheanism, and might have served as an alternate epigraph for Mary Shelley's disturbing novel.

Harold Bloom

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ON VIETNAM

The following comments are in response to the "Statement on Vietnam and the Dominican Republic" that was printed in the Summer PR. In the next issue, the signers of the original statement will have an opportunity to reply to some of the arguments and allegations and to examine the issues now brought into the discussion.

Lionel Abel

Quite frankly, I do not think the statement circulated by PR on American action in Vietnam and in the Dominican Republic a good statement or one worth signing. True, I already signed a very poor statement protesting American policy, one which appeared in the *New York Times* in a paid advertisement. I thought when I signed it—so did Irving Howe and Philip Rahv whom I consulted—that it was more important to disapprove publicly of American policy than to be too finicky about the way in which such disapproval was expressed. A statement gotten out by PR, not intended for a mass audience, is something else again and would have to be very clear and forthright for me to want to sign it.

I do not think the statement in PR either clear or forthright. Is our policy in Vietnam clearly wrong? The statement does indicate that our policy in Santo Domingo is wrong, and clearly that. But on the question of our policy in Vietnam, which might quite possibly lead to much greater disasters than our policy in Santo Domingo, the statement in PR is rather hesitant and uncertain. Why this hesitancy? Why this uncertainty? Why require those who criticize American policy to suggest an alternative one which "would lead to a negotiated peace in Vietnam or promote the interests of the people of Southeast Asia." Must we who protest the President's policy indicate as our credentials for such criticism how a negotiated peace in Southeast Asia could be arrived at? I think the stipulation preposterous. Very probably a negotiated peace in Vietnam cannot be arrived at. Our past policies have taken care of that alternative. Very probably all that we can do now is to step up the war, which is what

the President is doing, or get out. Where does PR stand on the matter as thus formulated. Is it for getting out or stepping up the war? I am for getting out.

It is said that if we get out of Vietnam, we shall lose prestige. No doubt, we shall. But we are also losing prestige as well as lives by stepping up the war. Besides, nobody doubts America's military strength and so the prestige we should lose in leaving Vietnam would hardly be shattering to our world position. Nobody will think America weak militarily if we leave Southeast Asia now. But people all over the world think that we are politically and intellectually weak and they think this because we are stepping up the war in Southeast Asia. In other words there are no military laurels for us to gain in that part of the world. But we could gain prestige for our political wisdom and intellectual strength if we hit upon some way of turning that part of the world over to the people who inhabit it, instead of imposing on them a war they obviously do not want.

After some remarks about our policy in Santo Domingo which I thoroughly endorse, the statement in PR says, "Obviously the time has come for some new thinking," to which President Johnson and his advisers could easily reply, "Very good, tell us some of your new thoughts," and what would the editors of PR say then? Besides, I do not believe "new thinking" is required at all to judge the issue posed either in the Dominican Republic or in South Vietnam. The issue is simply this: can military power make up for a wrong policy? Let us not forget that the German army under Hitler won one tremendous victory after another and through these military victories brought about the total defeat of the German people. Was any naval victory greater than the victory the Japanese won at Pearl Harbor and through which victory they lost their empire? Let us not then put our hopes in gaining prestige through military measures against Ho Chi Minh. And since original thinking on the matter is not at all required, or terribly difficult for that matter, let not PR call for such thinking, but for a policy that can be defended without equivocations or reservations.

Henry David Aiken

Let me make one or two general comments before talking to the specific question raised by the formulation "on Vietnam and the Dominican Republic" in PR. The American government frequently defends our policy in Vietnam on the ground that we have a commitment

to defend the national "integrity" of South Vietnam against "aggression." Now I am certainly no friend of aggression (whether by Communists or by democrats), but at this stage I am a little skeptical of the virtue of such commitments as a general rule. In most instances, moreover, they do not seem to me to be sincere. (What is at stake in most such cases is the hegemony of the United States itself. And between the hegemony and the legitimate self-interest of the American people, I draw a ready distinction.) Rarely have the new nation-states been capable either of self-government or of self-defense; in all but a very few the possibility of democracy or even of a genuine rule of law is remote. In most parts of the world, let us face it, the choice, all sadly, is between rival tyrannies, and as between tyrannies, the one to choose is that which least threatens the conditions of existence. Hence while I weep for the Vietnamese, I can spare scarcely a tear for South Vietnam.

The formulation in PR takes it for granted that reflection about the present U.S. policy in the Far East should be restricted to alternatives that would lead to a negotiated peace in Vietnam. On the contrary, one should first examine the importance of a *negotiated* peace. Other things equal, no doubt a negotiated peace is better than one which is not. However, few governments negotiate until they are obliged to do so: winners make poor negotiators. In the present instance, where "we" are so obviously not winning, a secondary value for ourselves would be that a negotiated peace would help to save the great American face. But *surely* this is a secondary good in the circumstances. Great nations, almost by definition, can afford more loss of face than small nations.

As matters stand it is doubtful whether more than face-saving can be gained from negotiated peace, but for good measure let us add the possibility of safeguarding "our friends" in Vietnam from reprisals. The point is that a negotiated peace is quite obviously impossible without radically increasing the scope and the intensity of the war in Vietnam for an indefinite period. Is this justifiable? It seems to me that, all things considered, it plainly is not. The result would be a great increase in the already terrible suffering and demoralization in the whole area and on all sides without seriously improving the chances of stopping the spread of Communism in Southeastern Asia. In order really and effectively to stop the spread of Communism, the American government would have to set up in South Vietnam a permanent military enclave capable of defending indefinitely what little remains in "our" hands. The result would not vaguely improve the chances of a free or democratic society emerging anywhere where it does not now exist. And I submit that it does not

exist *anywhere* in the area in question. Indeed our "imperial" presence would merely increase disaffection and distrust for us throughout the world, including those parts where we are not already actively hated. Worse, it would obviously increase the chance of an eventual confrontation with China or with an Asian bloc led and in the end dominated by China.

Why then don't we simply follow the wise practice of the French and clear out of Vietnam? No doubt we will "open the door" to further extensions of "Communist" power. So what? It isn't at all clear that even if the whole of Southeast Asia should go "Communist" this would improve the situation of China as a world power or as a threat to the integrity or peace of the United States. On the contrary, it might well make trouble for the Chinese while freeing us of a terrible drain on resources, including our *human* resources. Here again a lesson can be learned from the French. Can we afford indefinitely the cost of saving the world from Communism, especially in areas that don't clearly want to be saved from it?

But suppose we do stay and fight it out for a "negotiated peace." What would be the result? A "free society"? Who believes it? I, at any rate, do not. In the present world context, the statement "the creation of a world in which free societies can exist should be the goal of any international policy," is of doubtful relevance to the terms on which genuine political decisions must be made. If by a "free society" one means a constitutional republic of the sort we Americans enjoy then I am bound to say that over a large part of the globe, perhaps regrettably, such a goal cannot be implemented, even if the United States government were to extend and to escalate its military operations a thousand times. Throughout most of Asia and Africa such a form of political organization is evidently out of the question; the people are unprepared for it and few of their leaders, on any side, seem dedicated to it. What then? Shall we cling to a goal which makes sense at home mainly because of our rather special social and economic circumstances? Elsewhere it seems more like escapism than a significant policy. But what if we do not so restrict the notion of a "free society?" Is it not *conceivable* that governments calling themselves "Marxist" or even "Communist" might actually do better, so far as the negotiable aspirations of the inhabitants are concerned, than alternative setups of the sort we have sponsored in South Vietnam? Is the answer to this question foregone? No one has shown it to be so. How then can I not echo the cry: "Yankee, go home!"

And the same goes regarding the Dominican Republic.

Marshall Cohen

It seems to me either empty or disingenuous to say that you do not think present policies in Vietnam are good ones unless you yourselves have some idea of better ones. Otherwise, you simply think the situation is unfortunate. How, then, can you say that you haven't heard of any, and imply that you yourselves can't formulate any, better ones? I myself think there are a considerable number of policies that would be preferable to the Administration's (insofar as I can determine what it is). I have already signed a petition protesting against Johnson's "escalation" policy—drafted, I believe, by Robert A. Dahl and circulated to the staff at Yale—and I feel, consequently, that I would be engaging in an unjustified act of self-criticism if I now signed the one in PR. Nor can I accept your representation of other petitioners and critics who have, I believe, already done a great deal of "fresh thinking." Surely, Lippmann, Morgenthau and Galbraith—to mention only a few whose credentials are impeccably anti-Communist—cannot be accused of thinking that everything would be "fine" if the Yanks went home, or of not "caring" whether "Asia goes Communist." (Even if one were to acquiesce in some degree or form of Communist "control" of Vietnam it does not follow, as you suggest, that one would acquiesce in, still less show that one did not care whether, Asia as a whole went "Communist.") It is excessively paradoxical to suggest that the critics have based their criticism "on the apolitical assumption that power politics, the Cold War, and Communists are merely American inventions." Morgenthau has been, after all, our leading exponent of power politics. And it was Lippmann who gave the very phrase, "the Cold War," popular currency. It seems to me that many of the critics—not all of whom are beatniks—have shown a far greater sensitivity to political (not to mention other) realities than the government has. I think it particularly unfortunate that PR has chosen to focus its criticism so sharply on the alleged naïveté and deficient anti-Communism of the critics. The administration's not infrequent displays of disingenuousness, ineptitude and wrong-headedness are the more pertinent objects of criticism. I had hoped that PR was entering a period in which it would show less zeal in policing the American Left than it has on some occasions in the past. Do you take it for your Caribbean?

Norm Fruchter

Why is your statement so pusillanimous? Beyond the carping insinuations, what does it say? American policies in Vietnam and the

Dominican Republic are not "good ones." Critics of American policy are apolitical or naïve about Communism. No alternative policies are available (or recommended by your signers), but our present policies are held unjustifiable. "The time has come for new thinking."

Why should men of such calibre publish such crap? Why should men of such calibre bother to backbite the increasing student protest about our war in Vietnam? I share the views of "the critics of American actions in Vietnam" but my assumptions about the Cold War and American responsibility for its inception, escalation and continuance are hardly apolitical. I think about what would happen should American troops be withdrawn from Vietnam. I think the N.L.F. would constitute a government. I think that government would be collectivist. I do not think that Stalinist nightmares would inevitably follow that government's inception, and my hope is that a humane socialism, rather than a dictatorial communism, will result from the N.L.F.'s regime. But should authoritarian terror be guaranteed (which it certainly is not), I would still demand American troops get out of Vietnam. I am no isolationist, but I do not believe our present American government has the right to intervene anywhere in the world. Our troops and resources are destroying the economy and society of both North and South Vietnam, in the name of a democratic alternative we have helped to destroy, in the service of a freedom substantial numbers of American citizens do not and have never enjoyed.

Had your signers been more committed to aiding the growing pressure for American withdrawal than to setting their juniors and inferiors straight, they might have produced a less compromised and petty statement. Consider this question of alternatives. I want our involvement ended, our troops home, the killing ended. All of us who want an end to our war have a responsibility to maximize our protest, not to draft alternative policies. If we can make our protest significant, and that protest buttresses the growing outcry and outrage against our Vietnam war, the Administration (pressured by a deteriorating international situation) might decide to withdraw. Strategists and similar experts will then be charged to devise a policy for withdrawal which saves maximum "face." (Witness the process of our decision not to press for payment of the Soviet Union's debt to the U.N.) Saving "face" is the Administration's problem, as is the definition of the appropriate policy. I'd get out now and lose all "face"; internationally, ours gets more loathsome each month our war continues, partly because our "tactics" get more exposure abroad than in our domestic (and domesticated) media.

Your signers can only "lament" and ask, plaintively, for "new thinking." New thinking won't get us out of Vietnam; an escalating protest

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might. But your signers seem more upset about the naïveté and apolitical assumptions of the protestors than they are anguished by the damage our war causes. Your statement will not aid new or clear thinking, will not aid protest, will not encourage solutions, will not bring our government closer to recalling our troops and ending our war. There is neither anger nor anguish implicit in your statement, only an irritation about being disturbed and a weary determination to set the record straight. And a repetition of stale formulas about social democracy, a use of clichés (“go Communist,” “free societies”) your signers would do well to blue-pencil when they appear on student themes. Some of your signers’ students have transcended both the impotent world-weariness and the ideological clichés, and are managing more than laments; your signers would have done better to have joined the growing protest, or kept silent.

Irving Howe

Though I signed the statement on Vietnam that appeared in the last PR I felt uneasy about it once the issue came out. Apart from a few minor exaggerations (e.g., I doubt that “*most* of the criticism of Administration policy at the teach-ins . . . has simply taken for granted that everything would be fine if only the Yanks would go home”), the thrust of the statement against the kind of campus pietism which revels in the worst about U.S. policy while turning mush-headed about the Vietcong seems to me justified. But meanwhile U.S. policy has taken still another turn for the worse: wholesale shelling of Vietnamese villages, refusal to cease bombing in the North, plans for large shipments of troops. We cannot discount the possibility of drifting into a war that would be politically and militarily frustrating, as well as humanly appalling. In these circumstances, I feel that the pontifical foolishness that has fringed the otherwise excellent teach-ins is not nearly so important as the need to struggle for changes in U.S. policy. Let me therefore summarize an opinion:

It is hopeless. South Vietnam, as an independent political entity, has virtually ceased to exist. Withdraw U.S. troops, and it would collapse in a day. The internal social disintegration is far advanced; there is no popular or even effective indigenous leadership; the cities are sullen and demoralized; the peasants seek only for ways to avoid shells from both sides. There is a pervasive weariness and cynicism: a response the U.S. has richly earned.

No doubt, by pouring in 300,000 or more troops the U.S. could

maintain urban outposts in South Vietnam—especially if the Chinese decided (as it might be to their advantage) not to intervene directly. But there is no reason to suppose that this would do anything but further inflame Vietnamese hostility against the white invaders and provoke some of the elements supporting the Saigon regime into a “neutralist” deal with the Vietcong. As long ago as last February, the *Wall Street Journal* had to remark:

It is doubtful that Europe could have been reclaimed from the Nazis if the peoples had any sympathy for Hitler or were uninterested in his removal. It looks increasingly doubtful that we can maintain a position, much less win a war, in South Vietnam against the opposition of apathy in the “ally.”

Whether the South Vietnamese are quite as attached to the Vietcong as certain Pekingese professors and an uneducable minority among U.S. pacifists maintain, can be questioned; but that they are disaffected from the Saigon regime seems beyond doubt.

It is too late. Perhaps, just perhaps, there was a chance in the middle fifties to establish a government in South Vietnam that would satisfy the needs of the peasants, institute some reforms in the cities, ventilate the country’s political life and thereby provide a rallying ground against the not-yet-overwhelming guerrillas. That chance has been lost, and in politics such chances do not soon come a second time. The disaster in Vietnam was due to the class selfishness and blindness of the local leadership, and to the failure of the U.S. government to understand, or its refusal to accede to, the social upheavals in the “underdeveloped” countries. In the grip of sterile notions about “free enterprise” and “strong man rule,” our policy helped prepare the ground for Communist victory.

“We” have lost, no matter who “we” is taken to signify: U.S. national interests, simple anti-Communism, or the cause of humane and democratic values (only the last of which matters overwhelmingly in regard to Vietnam). It is therefore necessary to negotiate with the Communists, not out of any fatuous notions that the Vietcong, once fully in power, is likely to do anything but institute a Communist-style dictatorship. No; we must negotiate because years of disastrously reactionary policies have destroyed the possibility of a democratic alternative in Vietnam, because we have no further moral right to inflict a war upon a people that has suffered twenty-five years of bloodshed, and because the only way of defeating the Vietcong militarily—a large-scale war—would bring consequences far worse than would follow from a Vietcong victory. And we should recognize that negotiations, if now undertaken, could not magically transform the unhappy reality, but could only register it realistically.

The best we can hope for in Vietnam is some sort of "neutralist" coalition regime, in which the Vietcong would soon be the dominant force, but which might spare Saigon a bloodbath. And perhaps some lessons could be learned from the debacle, so that, say, in the Dominican Republic and other Latin American countries better policies would be pursued. I say "perhaps" because right now there is little evidence that this will happen.

President Johnson also claims to be working for negotiations, but on the basis of a more satisfactory balance of power. Can that be reached, however, short of an enormous increase in military participation which would bring with it a whole complex of new and grave risks? That is, the effort to achieve a better balance of power will probably lead to a new imbalance of power, but at an intensified and more dangerous scale, with the major powers in Asia increasing their investment and therefore finding it harder to reach a truce. The more intelligent people in Washington seem now to realize that "victory" is out of the question, but in their unwillingness to face defeat they may lead us into a magnified disaster.

Paul Jacobs

I think the basic conception of the statement in PR is faulty, for it makes a separation between American policy in Vietnam and in the Dominican Republic. I am convinced that both cases represent the carrying out of the same basic policy, the same view of the world and the U.S. role in it.

In the case of Vietnam, a tone of "a plague on both your houses" pervades the analysis in PR. The U.S. policies are wrong, it says, but so too are the policies of the Vietcong, North Vietnam and Communist China. But in the Dominican Republic, the statement clearly states that only the U.S. is wrong because we are not supporting "democratic revolutionary groups."

This separation assumes that while there may be some justification for our involvement in Vietnam because Asia may go Communist if the American presence is withdrawn, no such justification existed in the Dominican Republic. Thus, the statement's complaint about the American role in Vietnam is directed primarily towards its character, i.e., the essentially military nature of the operation and not towards the general problem of what role the U.S. ought to play in Southeast Asia.

But suppose, for example, that the charges of a possible Communist take-over in the Dominican Republic were correct and that indeed, there

was a very good possibility the Dominican Republic would have become another Cuba if the U.S. had not intervened. Would the signers of the statement then have supported the U.S. actions?

I think this is the heart of the question and I do not think the statement answers it or even deals with it. What should our policy be if, in fact, a country within our sphere of interest, which seems to be worldwide, does, in fact, opt for a Communist society? Two clear answers are being given to that question today in America: one side says that we must resist the spread of Communist societies wherever they may be and to do that best in Asia, we ought to destroy Communist China now before it has the opportunity to build up its military potential any further.

The other answer to the question says that other peoples' choices are none of our concern even when, for very good reasons, we don't like their choices; or that at least our legitimate concern over those choices must stop at the point of intervention, *in any form*, into the internal or external affairs of another country.

Both these views are legitimate ones, worthy of serious debate. But the statement in PR avoids such a discussion. And because it does, it cannot be used as a basis for either discussing the main alternatives the U.S. presently confronts or developing a range of other possible programs which take into account the possibilities of bringing about a nuclear war.

PR asks for "new thinking" about U.S. policies. But that "new thinking" must face the question I have raised: what should our policy be toward other countries who choose some form of Communist totalitarianism, as all agree would happen in a free election in Vietnam and might have happened in the Dominican Republic?

I do not suggest that any simple answers can be given to such difficult questions. My own inclination is towards assuming that only the most limited form of intervention is possible in an age of nuclear weapons. But before any answer can be given, the existence of the questions must be recognized.

Christopher Lasch

I object to the statement for two reasons.

In the first place, the attack on the teach-ins is both unnecessary to the argument (since nobody involved in the teach-ins is advocating anything, in the way of alternatives, other than what PR is advocating) and inaccurate; it is simply not true that "most of the criticism" assumes that the Cold War is an American invention. In treating the teach-ins as



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naïve, “apolitical,” etc., PR echoes the Administration’s complaint about the “gullibility” of intellectuals. I can understand why the Administration holds these opinions; I cannot understand why intellectuals themselves should find them so congenial.

In the second place, the suggestion that we should support democratic revolutions is too harmless and vague. It is unimpeachable, but it doesn’t take you very far toward a policy for Vietnam, where the choice is not between a democratic revolution and an authoritarian one but between an authoritarian revolution and no revolution at all. It is impossible any longer to imagine a South Vietnam (short of one which has been razed to the ground and permanently occupied by an American army) in which the Vietcong will not play the decisive role. PR has nothing to suggest about how the United States should cope with a situation of this sort—as opposed to one like the Dominican Republic, where the issues are somewhat simpler. Trying to find a “democratic revolutionary group” in South Vietnam—a movement which is at once democratic and committed to fight the Vietcong—is looking for something that no longer exists. The best we can do is install a neutralist government in Saigon; instruct it to negotiate a settlement with the Vietcong and with Ho Chi Minh which will lead to reunification, through elections, of North and South Vietnam; and resign ourselves to a preponderant Communist influence in the new government. We should then encourage the new government to pursue a course independent of Moscow and Peking, and help to make this possible by means of economic assistance and political forbearance. In short, we should treat Vietnam as another Yugoslavia. Perhaps it is too late even for that, but such an outcome is certainly the best we can hope to promote. In any case, it is much too easy to make vague pronouncements, from an Olympian perspective high above the sordid level of concrete discussions of actual situations, about the need to support democratic revolutions. Can anyone to the left of Goldwater possibly object to such a statement? And doesn’t the very unobjectionable character of the statement, under the circumstances, become objectionable in its own right?

Jack Ludwig

I don’t know what would be gained by a comment on the statement in PR. I choose, I think, to be mum—an alternative to which the drafters and signers gave a certain amount of thought, I suppose.

Hanoi might disagree with what's said, and Bundy along with the CIA, but who in between?

So to the problem, American armed force in Vietnam and the Dominican Republic: here again I want to avoid the absurd. I could not begin to argue with the Pentagon about men and materiel in Vietnam. Nobody prospers in an argument based on his ability to guess the color of the elephant in the other guy's hand. One totally absurd aspect of the teach-ins is the intense little man trying to make his case against our role in Vietnam by patching together alternatives served up by the *New York Times*, CBS, the *Nation*, etc.

What I would prefer to say about Vietnam and the Dominican situation is that they point up what the Cold War has brought us, and what it is still bringing. A conspiratorial view of all occurrences, trivial or serious, which constitutes the long-hard-look, the sophisticated-not-the-naïve estimate of Communist aims, which separates the men from the boys, and clearly indicates whom you would like to have behind a tree with you, and whom not. The Bundy Baroque vision is not as crude as the Legion's, or as inelegant as a Bircher's, yet shares with them the blunting of distinction, and the potentially hysterical response—that the Cold War makes every statement and every institution subject to our notion of a clear and present danger. Why not “manage the news” in a life-and-death struggle against Communism? Why not use U-2's and CIA tricks against this dedicated worldwide conspiracy? Why not separate the “those who are for us” from the “those who are against us” irrevocably? Why not say, with Johnson, that intellectuals and Administration critics aren't upset by the sapping of an American billet but terribly distraught over American bombing, two-hundred-planes-always-on-the-money, of only bridges and ammunition dumps and Vietcong hiding places? Why not have an Administration spokesman spend five or six hours on the University of Wisconsin campus and then make a definitive statement separating the frat boys and the YAF-ers and the engineers from the “extremists” who think two hundred bombers may be hitting not only iron but women and children in their peace-forcing daily raids? Why not have Bundy prove that Hans Morgenthau changes his mind or contradicts himself and is therefore not a fit person to criticize Administration policies which, it follows, must then be without an alternative? Why not play the we-are-only-human role, admit “goofs” in the past, concede fallibility, and yet plunge on in a manner which only infallibility could sanction?

Because, I submit, these views of reality are massive oversimplifications of the Cold War, appreciated only by a computer. The Cold War

is the sanction of the *either/or*, the *yes/no*, the *0/1*, and, being so, is too serious a matter to wait for a Bosch to be distinguished from a Castro, or a Vietnam from a Korea. Nor must the Cold War be burdened with distinctions such as would separate the idea of democracy from the idea of America, or the idea of democracy from the idea of free enterprise, or the idea of free enterprise from the idea of the United Fruit Company, or Standard Oil. Both the CIA and the American banana-grower know Communism when they see it, and if the undergraduates on American campuses want to continue to investigate and differentiate, it's only because they are "extremists" or "naïve" or "taken in."

I, personally, have argued the United States' armed involvement in Vietnam and the Dominican Republic many times, only to have my point of view subjected to the Either/Or, which comes up saying I want America to withdraw from Vietnam totally and unconditionally, which, in fact, I don't. I believe that sad reality fixes itself on actions, just or not just. If Bolingbroke became King illegally, he was no less King in reality. So with American involvement in Vietnam. Though I might not have approved of that involvement when it began I look on it as real, and certainly connected with our heroic, and sometimes quixotic, attempt to meet Communism (or anything which looks a little like it) move by move, head-on, or obliquely. The "domino" analogy is a sweet knuckleheaded oversimplification, great for the unimaginative who welcome the chance to live with any metaphor, however tenuous. I would take the Vietnam confrontation as serious enough in and of itself, and would welcome a truce, an end to the fighting, even if that end came at the price of a settlement as unsatisfactory as the one we all live with in Korea at the present time.

What Johnson may not be aware of sufficiently, or Bundy care about, or McNamara, is that the bombing of North Vietnam appears to intellectuals not just on American campuses, but throughout Europe, as well as in Asia and Africa and South America, as but one more manifestation of American racist brutality, the same as was practiced on Nagasaki more than on Hiroshima, the same as is practiced in Bogalusa and Selma. That power misused changes the world's impression from *Strength* to *Bullying*. I do not say this impression is justified, or even the majority view. I do say that good bright people, in this country and elsewhere, *believe* no 200-plane raid could ever be loosed on a nation of white men, our previous war actions to the contrary. They *believe* that somewhere, under the carpenter's tears for the departed oysters, is a notion about "dirty little yellow men."

And I suspect that the same kids who protest Bogalusa and Vietnam

make a connection, and that this connection does not proceed from Maoism (though it indeed is present too) but from an attitude toward a revolution within this country and throughout the world. During the I-like-Ike years the intellectual, soured by McCarthy and tired old men, cut himself off from politics. Kennedy helped to turn students toward possibility. A bright young tough-minded guy could see himself in government service, either in the country, or in the State Department.

Johnson may not know, or, again, Bundy and McNamara care, but that same kind of student is once more souring. And that, I submit, is too high a price to pay to support Cold War oversimplification. Those "extremists" happen to be the brightest and best young minds I have encountered in the country. It's a pity a stiff-necked buttoned-up debater has been given the task of isolating them further. Someone who cared less about scoring points might find a solution both in Vietnam, and in Wisconsin.

Dwight Macdonald

I didn't sign the statement in PR because, despite a formal impartiality—much to be said against both sides—it asks American intellectuals to reopen a question many of us have come to consider closed: whether there is any justification, moral or in terms of national self-interest, for President Johnson's recent military adventures in Santo Domingo and Vietnam. "Obviously, the time has come for new thinking," it concludes, but to me this is not obvious. I've done my thinking months ago and it is dismally confirmed in each day's headlines. As for new thinking, let McGeorge do it. Nor does the statement indicate any new directions beyond such pious banalities as that we must "understand the political and economic problems of rapidly changing countries" and should "support democratic revolutionary groups." Amen but my own understanding is that revolutionary groups in such countries are rarely democratic and that the Vietnamese scene, North and South, is notably barren of them. So we find ourselves in what the statement in PR calls "a false dilemma" but I call a real one.

I agree that "power politics, the Cold War, and Communists" are not "merely American inventions" and that it is "apolitical," and stupid, to assume that "everything would be fine if only the Yanks would go home." But I can't agree that these formulations—surely a little broad for a sophisticated magazine?—fairly summarize what is "simply taken for granted [by] most of the criticism of Administration

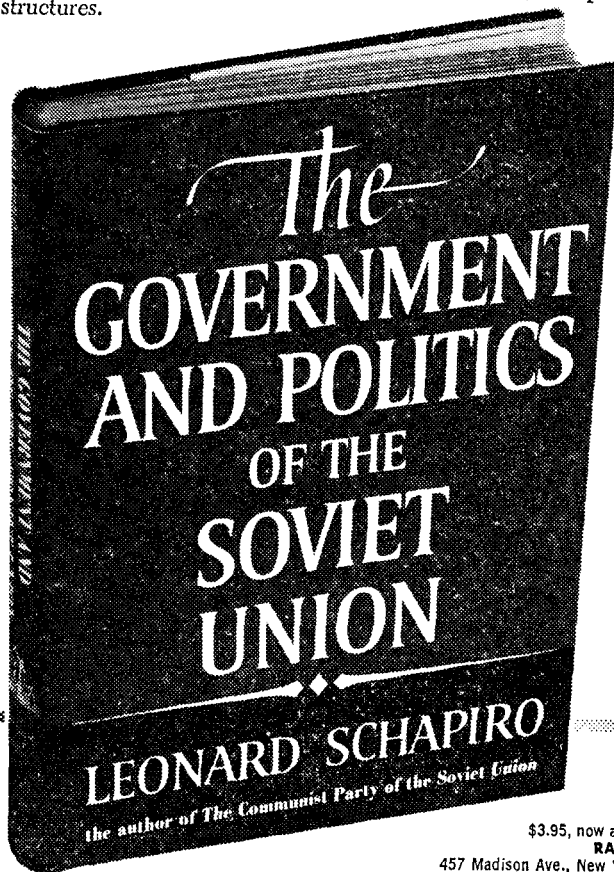
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policy at the teach-ins and in the various petitions we have been asked to sign." Of course Communist sympathizers have added their voices to the chorus—there is one at Rutgers, I note, and I trust PR is defending his unrevolutionary, democratic right to express such wrongheaded opinions so long as he keeps them out of the classroom—but, speaking as one who of late for the first time in fifteen years has been signing petitions, making speeches, and even picketing, I think the protests have deeper, more reasonable grounds than that double standard of morality I find as repugnant as the signers of the statement do. The statement in PR gives them: "disastrous violation of any democratic principles" (which, as you note, makes more, not less, Communist sympathizers) and "self-defeating military involvements [which] can be a substitute for political foresight only if we propose to police the whole world, and to imagine that we can do that is to lack even hindsight." The difference is that you don't draw conclusions ("new thinking" is needed) and you object to us doing so. But I think the evidence has been in for some time.

In less than a year—from the first bombings of North Vietnam last February through the Dominican invasion to the commitment of American combat troops in Vietnam and the buildup of our forces there to a projected 200,000 by the end of this year—we have become the most feared and hated nation in the world (feared more for the Goldwaterish recklessness than for the success of our use of military power). As Russia in Metternich's time was called "the gendarme of Europe," we are becoming the policeman of the world. "Around the globe—from Berlin to Thailand—are people whose well-being rests, in part, on the belief that they can count on us if attacked. . . . We will always oppose the effort of one nation to conquer another." So our President on April 7 last. At this writing, we are opposing the effort of North Vietnam to conquer South Vietnam by stepping up our air bombardment of—South Vietnam. "U.S. SAID TO PLAN DAILY B-52 RAIDS IN SOUTH VIETNAM" (*N. Y. Times*, August 31)—each B-52 carries fifty-one seven hundred and fifty pound bombs; "a qualified source said he had verified reports that civilians moved out of the area of a raid in Zone D last Thursday because they could not stand the smell of decomposing flesh." "RECORD AIR DRIVE POUNDS VIETCONG" (*N. Y. Times*, September 4): five hundred and thirty-two missions in one day "against a wide variety of targets," all in South Vietnam. In the next column, a dispatch from the U.N.: "To Peking's propagandists, working upon unsophisticated Asian masses, the widening use of American bombers, aircraft carriers and mechanized forces is taken to be a godsend. Crude propaganda daily portrays the U.S. as

wealthy and racist and as using its superior military technique to crush the aspirations of the awakening colored peoples of Asia."

Unsophisticated the masses, crude the propaganda, but why are we behaving the way Castro and Mao want us to, why are we going in for Kiplingesque idealism, shouldering *The White Man's Burden* ("The blame of those ye better / The hate of those ye guard") long after more sophisticated imperialisms have let it drop as too weighty an anachronism? Why do we think that, even if we miraculously win a military victory over the Vietcong—which now after ten years of massive American economic-military support to its enemies, controls most of the country—our army of occupation can set up and sustain a viable non-Communist government, assuming there is much left to govern after our bombings? And finally, why are *we* asked whether we "really care what happens to the people of Southeast Asia so long as America gets out"? The question is not what will or may happen to those people, but what is happening to them so long as America stays in.

Norman Mailer

Three cheers, lads. Your words read like they were written in milk and milk of magnesia. Still, your committee didn't close shop until close after this extraordinary remark: "The time has come for new thinking." Cha cha cha.

We will do our best to serve. First let it be established—as is done nowhere in the statement—that the editors support the war in Vietnam. For after all somber dubiety, and every reservation, we are left back at the beginning—"we have not heard of any alternative policy which would actually lead to a negotiated peace in Vietnam." But to provide alternative policy, people's front must remind you how the war in Vietnam goes on. The following statistics are furnished by Ho Chi Minh. No, indeed they are not. They are from a statement by Robert McNamara before the Senate Subcommittee on Department of Defense Appropriations and appeared August 5 in the *Times*.

"We now estimate the hard core of Vietcong strength at some 70,000 men . . . In addition, they have some 90,000 to 100,000 irregulars and some 30,000 in their political cadres, i.e., tax collectors, propagandists, etc. We have also identified at least three battalions of the regular North Vietnamese Army, and there are probably considerably more."

At least three battalions! That is to say, at most, 3,000 North

Vietnamese. If the battalions are understrength the figure may be half the size. But, continue with McNamara:

"At the same time the government of South Vietnam has found it increasingly difficult to make a commensurate increase in the size of its own forces, which now stand at about 545,000 men, including the regional and local defense forces but excluding the national police.

"Clearly, the time has come when the people of South Vietnam need more help from us and other nations if they are to retain their freedom and independence.

"We have already responded to that need with some 75,000 United States military personnel, including some combat units. This number will be raised to 125,000 almost immediately. . . . But, more help will be needed in the months ahead . . . to back up the hardpressed army of South Vietnam."

"Responded to that need." McNamara is the best thing to come along since Elmer Gantry. Let me give a little more. From a news conference, two months earlier, June 16. *"In 1964 alone . . . about 10,000 men were brought from North Vietnam to fight in South Vietnam."* Whereas in 1965 we will only bring in 100,000 Americans.

Well, McNamara is on record (again June 5) about ratios:

"The South Vietnamese regular and paramilitary forces facing the Vietcong total something in excess of 500,000 men. And they're facing, as I mentioned, about 165,000 guerrillas, a ratio something on the order of 4 to 1 [sic]. That's considerably less than is recognized as required to effectively deal with guerrillas."

The Pentagon's argument is that a government army must outnumber guerrillas in the ratio of ten to one if they are to hold the countryside and administer it well. But in South Vietnam, it happens to be the Vietcong which holds most of the countryside and proceeds each year with its 30,000 political troops, its "tax collectors," to occupy and govern more land than the year before, against an army—depending on how you count—from three to eight times its own size. Only an army fighting a war in which the agricultural population is near to unanimous behind them (or near to unanimous *against* the South Vietnamese) can do thus well. Can you conceive of another explanation?

Now, our entrance in force will shift this imbalance. It will certainly prolong the war. It will also shift the moral center of America. I quote a piece by Charles Mohr, *New York Times*, August 9.

"The attempts by public information officers to de-emphasize the importance of civilian deaths and the burning of village huts at the hands of United States marines have not been duplicated by senior Marine Corps officers here. . . .

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General Walt quickly conceded last week that on one military operation his troops had killed three children and a woman. He expressed deep regret. The marines have also conceded that at least 51 huts were burned on another operation.

"A Vietnamese observer who discussed the incidents shook his head and said, 'The 10-year-old children who witnessed their village being burned are the ones who at 15 will take up rifles for the Vietcong and fight to the death.'"

If World War II was like *Catch 22*, this war will be like *Naked Lunch*. Lazy Dogs, and bombing raids from Guam. Marines with flamethrowers. Jungle gotch in the gonorrhea and South Vietnamese girls doing the Frug. South Vietnamese fighter pilots "dressed in black flying suits and lavender scarves" (the *New York Times*).

Add a little to this: let us recognize that we are in a war commanded by a President whose deepest and tenderest emotion seems to be directed toward his own boils and rash. Public life, he forever reminds us, is cruel to public figures. There is a catch in his voice as he makes such remarks. He is happier with the balm of paid prose. Remember Jack Valenti's words last June? ". . . *The new President sat there, like a large grey stone mountain, untouched by fear or frenzy, from whom everyone began to draw strength. And suddenly, as though the darkness of the cave confided its fears to the trail of light growing larger as it banished the night, the nation's breath, held tightly in its breast, began to ease, and across the land the people began to move again.*

"The President, thank the Good Lord, has extra glands, . . ." Well, we are literary politicians—we know what to deduce from such a style. It is of course possible that Johnson is no more Machiavellian than any major gent. But it is also possible there are disproportions to the man. Should one think of Macbeth or Uriah Heep? Valenti's prose opens the drawer to some fine horrors.

Besides, our present policy in Vietnam which the editors gloomily, glumly, *inevitably* (they are liberals after all) proceed to defend, is in fact a policy which is the antithesis of the previous policy. The previous policy, the policy in effect just before escalation, was the unstated policy to lose quietly in Vietnam, and get out. There were better countries to defend. It was a practical policy which might in practice have worked or not worked, but the new policy, the policy of escalation, is a radical policy; it is a policy of the radical right, right out of the naked lunching heart of the Wasp in his fevers. For no one can know, not even Johnson himself, if escalation is our best defense against Communism, a burning of orphans to save future orphans, or if the war is the first open expression of a totalitarian Leviathan which will yet dominate everything still

not nailed down in American life: art, civil rights, student rebellions, public criticism in mass media. We may be living in the shadow of the biggest hype of them all, our last con game: red-neck dynamics; liberal rhetoric. There is the ineradicable suspicion that liberal rhetoric was conceived by Satan to kiss the behind of something unspeakable.

Recapitulate: we have an accelerating war whose justification by the Establishment is that there is final and historic honor in fighting an unpopular war if the cause is grave and just. That is one possibility. I cannot say with certainty that this cannot be so. But, in turn, who of you can say with greater certainty that the President is not insomniac in his vanities; and that the nation is not insane with Christ, pop art, fiberglass, moonshots, race riots, and Hilton Hotel architecture.

The editors ask for a counter-policy. I offer it. It is to get out of Asia. A Communist bureaucrat is not likely to do any more harm or destroy any more spirit than a wheeler-dealer, a platoon sergeant, or a corporation executive overseas. We have our malignancies, Communism has theirs. Whether capitalism or Communism will finally prove more monstrous is out of my capacity, or yours, to guess, but it is perhaps evident to both of us that Communism cannot grow without exploding its own form. If Marx's vision conceivably left room for some minds to remain fertile, Stalin fixed a process of petrifying thought until post-Marxian thought is now an ideology which cannot change remotely so fast as reality and so must be insulated from reality by war. War is the health of Communist ideology whereas peace and the abrupt *strifeless* acquisition of backward countries is a nightmare to ideology. For backward lands which are not used up by war have wealths of primitive lore with which to mine the foundations of ideology.

Consider: a quiet end to the war in Vietnam by the agency of a quiet victory of the Vietcong might have given the world one more backward Red nation with still one more tenacious home-grown stubborn little Communist party at odds with China and in intrigue with Russia, thereby dividing world Communism somewhat further. Now, grace of escalation—we have the likelihood that any future alignment between Russia and China will be a little more on China's terms; and for China vis-à-vis North Vietnam, (which countries formerly shared the distaste of England and Ireland for one another) we have accelerated a collaboration.

Of course all those Washington Pistols, all those keepers of the chalice, will talk about India falling if we "get out." And there will be tears in Joe Alsop's eyes. Of course. And I, of course, don't know. Maybe if Vietnam falls, so, too, falls India. So to what? Do we really want India?

Do we desire it? Do we desire deeply to die of indigestion? Might it not be simpler if the Communists die of the same disease? But, in fact, might they not hesitate? For, the more Communism grows at a vertiginous rate, the more it must suffer from vertigo. It is like America. So, Communism might even come to recognize that Communism in possession of three-quarters of the world cannot have any world. The world is now balanced on too much. So Communism might even retreat before the terror of ideology being lost in the jungles and grasslands. What if Communism is not an unstoppable force—but is rather (since we can only approach comprehension of these matters by metaphor) a giant with a specific neurosis that it will awake one morning on the compulsion to eat its own limbs. I say: throw Asia open to Communism. The meal will not be taken. If it is, we will even live to see the Communists destroy themselves. It is certain we can not destroy them. We, like them, can only eat upon ourselves—this is after all a century for perverts and Reds.

But, believe me not. Take the alternative: might against might. Our troops against theirs—no, of course we are not serious. Even Barry Goldwater knows that we can't defeat the Communists militarily, not even with atom bombs. How could we occupy what we left? The cost of rebuilding it. The boredom for America's young couples—obliged to live out their early married years in rebuilt cities in Siberia and Mongolia. All the ration stamps. All the ghosts of 900,000,000 atomized corpses. No, we don't really want to defeat Communism militarily. But we do want to stand up man to man, stick to stick. If we cannot stop Communism by the force of our armies, we could of course pitch in to help create a world society of military and bureaucratic behemoths who will nibble at one another forever in small dribbled-out land wars while totalitarian tissues fill up with the waters of political edema, yes, just as our good prophet and saint, George Orwell, was dying to remind us.

Look to the other side. To absolute isolation. If all the world were Communist but America, America would be militarily in no poor position. We could still fight the rest of the world if we chose to. That is the paradoxical nature of nuclear war. But it is doubtful if Communism would then have the impetus to fight anything. Can anyone—even Dwight—conceive of Communism remaining unruptured in its cast-concrete heart on a diet of English lords, French intellectuals, Italian lovers, African drums, zen, yoga, pot, the New Wave, pop art, camp—the prospect invites occupation. "Come on in, honey, this hustler's got enough diseases to keep you dripping all your days."

That, of course, is not programmatic, I would assure you. The world will never go to the Communists because they will never get through

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Asia, Africa and South America. They will bog down in the cultural swamps of our old imperial wastes; their minds will rupture in the new pressures on their cast iron formulations. For Communism contends with an impossibility: one cannot bring a modern economy to a backward country in a hurry, bulldozing through a wealth of primitive lore, without manufacturing a horde of mass men. And mass man is equal to the plague. Nihilistic, he is addicted to modern communications. Shakespeare, comic books, motors, electronics, jazz, plastic, fucking, frozen food, are all equal grit to his dispose-all. He consumes whatever culture is before him and is the secret enemy of any government which presumes to rule him. His secret allegiance is always to the enemy. So let the Communists rather than the Americans do the manufacturing of mass men in backward lands, in order that the secret allegiance of those new mass men be exactly to us.

For there is one way in which the West is superior to the Communists, and without that superiority, mass man cannot live. Mass man is an insatiable man, a malignancy of directionless greed at the mercy of his secret addiction—which is art. No population ever on earth has loved art so much as mass man for that is the only hope of his deliverance: that he may encounter some great art before he is dead. Only great art can penetrate into the tomb of the modern soul and bring a moment of cease to the backed-up murders of the modern heart. Here, on this violent spit, friends, is the place we are ahead in the Cold War. For our artists are better, our writers are better, our jazz musicians are better, our painters go further, our vision is more fierce, it explores more. It is relentless we almost dare to think. It may even prevail if we do not burn too many women and children fighting for Christ. Oh, Christ, what ass-holes be Americans.

Yet it may be too easy to end on this fine proud and strenuous moral note. For the sweet bloody truth is not so neat. If the Lord of the Snopes went to war in Vietnam because finally he didn't have the moral courage to try to solve an impossible mix of camp, red-neck, civil rights, street violence, playboy pornography and all the glut which bugs our works, if Lyndon Johnson finally decided in his fine brain that only a war was going to get America off the pot (we were that mercilessly screwed to the john by fifty years of smelling our national armpit every time the truth rose up to kiss us) well, what he didn't realize was that the war in Vietnam was not going to serve as cloaca for our worst emotions but instead was going to up the ante and give us more camp, more red-neck, more violence in the streets, more teen-age junkies, more

polite society gone ape, more of everything else Lyndon was trying to ship overseas.

Still, with it all, confess it, Mailer, the country is now in good humor. A wild good humor—it has been the wildest summer in years from Watts to Easthampton; it has been wild. The truth is, maybe we need a war. It may be the last of the tonics. From Lydia Pinkham to Vietnam in sixty years, or bust. We're the greatest country ever lived for speeding up the time. So, let's do it right. Let's cease all serious war, kids. Let's leave Asia to the Asians. Let us, instead, have wars which are like happenings. Let us have them every summer. Let us buy a tract of land in the Amazon, two hundred million acres will do, and throw in Marines and Seabees and Air Force, Scuba divers for the river bottom, motorcyclists for the mud-races, carrier pilots landing on bounce-all decks in typhoons, invite them all, the Chinks and the Aussies, the Frogs and the Gooks and the Wogs, the Wops and the Russkies, the Yugos, the Israelis, the Hindoos, the Pakistanis. We'll have war games with real bullets and real flamethrowers, real hot-wire correspondents on the spot, TV with phone-in audience participation, amateur war movie film contests for the soldiers, discotheques, playboy clubs, pictures of the corpses for pay TV, you know what I mean—let's get the hair on the toast for breakfast. So a write-in campaign (all of us) to King Corporation Exec Mr. Pres; let us tell him to get the boys back home by Christmas, back from Vietnam and up the Amazon for summer. Yours—readers—till the next happening.

Unless Vietnam is the happening. Could that be? Could that really be? Little old Vietnam just a happening? Cause if it is, Daddy Warbucks, couldn't we have the happening just with the Marines and skip all that indiscriminate roast tit and naked lunch, all those bombed-out civilian ovaries, Mr. J., Mr. LBJ, Boss Man of Show Biz—I salute you in your White House Oval, I mean America will shoot all over the shithouse wall if this jazz goes on, Jim.

Herbert Marcuse

I am grateful to the editors of PR for offering me the opportunity to comment on the "Statement on Vietnam and the Dominican Republic."

The statement is outspoken in its opposition to the American policy while at the same time making assumptions which all but invalidate this opposition.

After dissociating itself, in the opening sentence, from the “military involvements” required by American policy, the statement immediately proceeds to blame the critics of this policy for their “apolitical assumption that power politics, the Cold War, and Communism are merely American inventions.” This criticism is directed against a straw man; I know of no serious criticism which is based on this assumption.

Then, the opposition is censured because it “is not clear whether these critics think Asia will not go Communist if American troops are withdrawn or whether they don’t care. Nor is it clear whether they really care what happens to the people of Southeast Asia so long as America gets out.” These sentences imply assumptions which turn the critique of American policy into a critique of its critics and suggest a defense of American policy. Here are these assumptions:

1. If one advocates the withdrawal of American troops, one does not consider, or does not care about a Communist take-over.
2. If one does not care about a Communist take-over, one does not care what happens to the people in the respective countries.

No matter how one answers, the reply must appear as “un-American” according to the current usage of the term. But I shall offer an answer.

1. In my view, there are no facts which could corroborate the thesis that Asia (!) will go Communist if America gets out. There are, however, reasons to believe that Communism will be strengthened if America does not get out.

2. The question is not, whether one “really cares” if Asia goes Communist but whether American policy must be based on the proposition that Communism must be combatted, with military and semi-military power, wherever Communism appears. The question may be answered in the negative without offending against the national interest. According to the statement in PR, the creation of free societies should be the goal of any international policy. In the contemporary world, Communism takes many forms; not all of them must be irreconcilable with the goal of establishing a free society. In the backward countries (and perhaps not only in the backward countries), the emergence of free societies depends on fundamental social and economic changes which would abolish existing inequality, privilege and repression. Communism could carry through these changes (which are the historical prerequisite, not the advent of liberation). The signers of the statement seem to believe that “democratic revolutionary groups” can perform this function. I suggest that “democratic revolutionary” is a contradiction in terms—at least under the conditions prevailing in the backward countries. In as much as the necessary changes are revolutionary, they involve suppression of the estab-

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lished order (rather disorder), that is, they involve undemocratic policies and actions.

3. I venture to add that the continued existence of Communism may well stimulate the continued growth of capitalism (hasn't it already done so?) in competitive coexistence—competitive in the war against poverty, toil and inequality.

David Riesman

1. Having been in England during the teach-ins, I can testify that their existence and that of other forms of criticism and questioning helped belie the impression, common in much of the world, that an aroused and indiscriminate nationalism possesses our country. Quite conservative Englishmen, not habitually anti-American, had felt, especially after the Dominican Republic invasion, that an anti-Communist mania was growing; they would ask whether massive aid to India was not a better way of providing the non-white world with alternative models of development than bombing both Vietnams, coupled with bits of village aid. Indeed, it is not only in South America but even among our friends in Japan and in Europe that the United States has seemed to confirm the image of growing militarism. The teach-ins have served to connect parts of America with parts of the rest of the world at a time when the gap is very wide.

2. It is conceivable that the teach-ins and other protests, while maintaining valuable international links and even possibly influencing the degrees of restraint exercised in escalating the war, have also in some small measure been encouraging to the Vietcong and its supporters, especially the Chinese. Some escalation may even reflect the Administration's desire to counter any message of divided opinion in the United States. (How terrible at this point, as before, is our lack of direct diplomatic contact and journalistic and academic contact with Mainland China and with North Vietnam; and how shortsighted our refusal to offer direct negotiations to the National Liberation Front of the Vietcong, whose interests may not be wholly coterminous with those of North Vietnam, let alone China.) The idea that bombing of North Vietnam would facilitate not so much negotiations as concessions shows contempt for our adversaries and ignorance not only of their character but of the experience in World War II that bombings actually strengthened morale and the determination of the enemy and damaged war-making ability far less than Air Force strategists had promised. Moreover, with the

bombardments by the Navy and later by SAC, the uneasy impression is created that the Vietnamese, along with a few unlucky Americans, are being sacrificed to inter-service American rivalries, as some may earlier have been sacrificed to the practice and search for counter-insurgency effectiveness applicable to the Third World. If this continues, the precarious detente with the Soviet Union, already damaged, may be further sacrificed; plans for anti-missile defense and bomb shelters are again alarmingly coming up. Secretary McNamara and President Johnson have exercised restraint in these spheres, and in Vietnam also have resisted Right Wing and more general eagerness to "solve" the war by bombing Hanoi or China. The bombings in the North were a departure from this restraint and should be stopped unconditionally; to do so would make clear at home and abroad the reimposition of limits.

3. At an earlier point, we might have made clear, as Walter Lippmann and others proposed, that we were holding a base—a temporary Taiwan—in South Vietnam to show our good faith to the world; to protect the President and the Democratic party against the Right Wing in this country; and above all to provide a haven for Vietnamese Catholics and others who might fear reprisals. Such a policy might have spared us much confusing cant about protecting freedom and democracy in South Vietnam, while making clear our willingness to protect those who have relied on us. No one could regard such a plan as ideal: it is quasi-colonial; it might not survive American impatience nor Vietcong provocation; but it seems a lesser evil than the present course.

4. In a world threatened by nuclear dispersion, the modicum of stability in the midst of revolutionary change which the great powers can provide seems to me an international goal as essential as "the creation of a world in which free societies can exist." I am for peaceful, competitive co-existence of all societies, free and unfree, South African and Paraguayan, Cuban and Yugoslav, North and South Korean. Not only can the United States not police the whole world without arousing eventual deadly reprisals, but we cannot even do so much as we would like to improve it, or "to support democratic revolutionary groups." Perhaps mistakenly, I detect in the statement in PR an expansive idealism of a muted, non-military white man's burden sort. Naturally, I am not indifferent to what happens in Southeast Asia or elsewhere, and consider myself both an American and a citizen of a not-yet-extant world community. But I have such confidence in the American example, once freed of all but a minimum deterrent armory, that I am willing to wait for the spread of freedom—even eventually into the heart of Chinese "thought-reformed" territory. People almost everywhere want the blessings, vulgar as well as open-handed, which America (however unevenly) exhibits.

However, freedom is more subtle and takes infinitely longer to accomplish than repression. Meantime, nationalism, once the friend of progress and now increasingly its enemy, has proven even more contagious. On our side, pride and belief in the American example give way on the Right Wing and often elsewhere to the despairing fallacy that we are "losing the Cold War." Even in the academic world, many still speak of the Sino-Soviet bloc, and regard the war in Vietnam as a now-or-never confrontation with world Communism, required in the national interest if not by a wider crusading impulse. Yet this is at the very time when in domestic affairs the most visionary plans gain a respectful governmental hearing, and when President Johnson is determined, not only to complete the unfinished business of the New Deal, but to move far beyond it, provided that intellectuals and administrators can help define the programs. The President understandably complains that he has also inherited the essential business of defending South Vietnam, but he has, it seems, himself accepted a legacy of self-righteous and complacent belief that we were helping repulse, not a civil war, but a Communist invasion, centrally directed. Hence, to invite the Vietcong's representatives to the conference table would at least begin political reeducation in this country, and this would be to an immensely greater audience than teach-ins or other minority protests could possibly reach.

In Santo Domingo, dealing with a feeble if not nonexistent foe, President Johnson found the courage to compensate for initial error, and is now seeking a coalition not dominated by the military. In Vietnam to begin de-escalation by stopping the bombings and offering to deal with the Vietcong would take great courage, too. It might not open the way toward immediate solution; but it would eventually make other changes possible, moving in the direction of a settlement. Otherwise, by polarizing the world and seeking goals beyond stabilization, he may prepare the very defeats he fears.

Harold Rosenberg

Read casually the "Statement on Vietnam and the Dominican Republic" in PR seems unobjectionable. True, it does not add much to earlier criticism. But it protests against the military buildup, favors "free societies" and "democratic revolutionary groups," and calls for an intellectual reappraisal. Why not sign it then? Because upon closer examination what comes through is the intellectual format of the paralyzing anti-Communist *Realpolitik* of the McCarthy days. In actual fact, the statement is a reactionary defense of the policy it seems to attack and its call

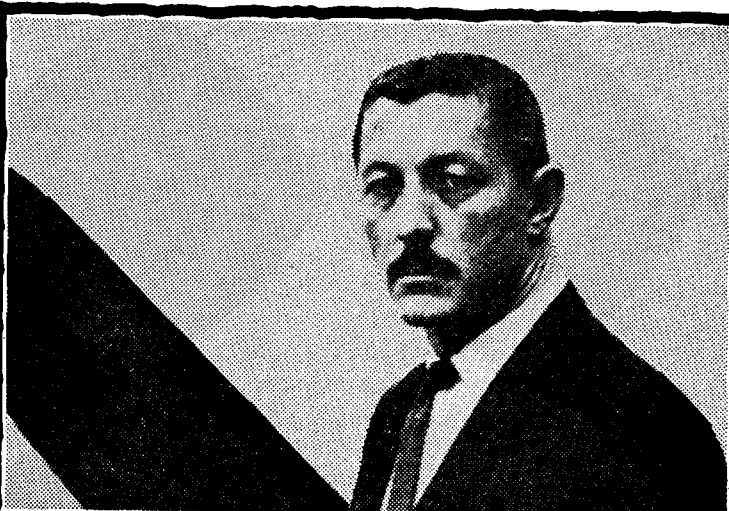


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for “new thinking” is silly. That it could have been written—and signed—by people of intelligence and good will illustrates the danger of falling into grooves of thought, particularly when one is busy with other matters.

Why is the statement reactionary? Because after declaring that “we do not think the present or past policies of the United States in Vietnam are good ones,” it devotes the rest of its long opening paragraph to attacking the critics of those policies. “We have not heard of any alternative policy . . . which would . . . promote the interests of the people of Southeast Asia.” An amazing assertion! One alternative policy would be *not* to burn down hundreds of homes of the South Vietnamese and kill women and children. Such a “negative” policy would, in my opinion, “promote the interests” of the South Vietnamese—and apparently, the South Vietnamese think so, too, to judge by the demonstrations in Saigon (not Hanoi) against the burnings.

Granted that refraining from burning villages and committing other atrocities would not guarantee a peace satisfactory to the U.S. Still, it would be an improvement over the present violence and *ought to be urged*. But the statement in PR does not urge it. Instead, it criticizes those who do urge an end to this policy for their failure to supply a policy that would deal with the peril of Communism. If you want an example of anti-Communism at work, this is it: it consists in rejecting as “unreal” any criticism that doesn’t make “stopping Communism” the primary issue and the ultimate test of progressive politics.

The statement denies that it requires critics to propose a “specific policy.” It deems it “not unfair,” however, to ask that they base their criticism on political realities and not on the “assumption that power politics, the Cold War, and Communists are merely American inventions. . . . and that everything would be fine if only the Yanks would go home.” Who said the Communists are American inventions? Senator Morse? Hans Morgenthau? The professors at the teach-ins? No message which I signed, or was asked to sign, put the sole responsibility for the Cold War on the United States. No doubt some Communists or Communist sympathizers have been advocating getting the Americans out. But the statement says that “*most* of the criticism . . . at the teach-ins and in the various petitions simply” asks for withdrawal. This amounts to subsuming all the critics of our Vietnam actions under the Communist line, except those who, like PR and the Right, are careful to proclaim their implacable anti-Communism. Worse, it constructs this amalgam by generalization and innuendo, without a single quotation, and then underlines the Communist connections of all critics by slander: “It is not clear whether these critics think Asia will not go Communist . . . or whether they don’t care. Nor is it clear whether they really care what happens to

the people of Southeast Asia." Again, this assault is typical anti-Communism.

It is precisely the implications of the old anti-Communist formulas that need to be rethought. Sure, the statement does not think our Vietnam policies are good. The Right doesn't either. PR differs from the Right in deploring (in passing) our failure "to support democratic revolutionary groups." But can PR prove to Mr. Bundy that such groups can be immunized against Communism? And according to whose definition of Communism? In the logic of anti-Communism "democratic revolutionary groups" are germ carriers of Left totalitarianism. Ergo, better "our" totalitarians than theirs.¹

The statement also "laments the increasing . . . military involvements of the United States." But if power politics and the Cold War are real and defeat of Communism comes first what do these pious laments mean? The military "involvements" must be adequate, mustn't they? The policy of the Administration may be bad, but in the anti-Communist perspective it is the only policy possible and the worse its consequences the more force ought to be engaged in making it prevail. Much as PR wishes to criticize from a radical-democratic point of view, it has worked itself into a corner from which *no* criticism is possible, except that of the extremist Right which carries the program of immunization against Communism to its logical conclusion of attacking any limitation on violence as "softness toward Communism." And this intellectual victory of the Right is precisely the peril to which doctrinaire anti-Communism exposes free societies.

Why then, call for "some new thinking?" If the Cold War is necessary, thinking will get us nowhere. All the terms and relations are fixed once for all, and no matter how the cards are shuffled the same hands will continue to turn up.

Isn't the statement itself proof of the futility of thought, given the position it has assumed? It doubts that those who have been criticizing "really care what happens to the people of Southeast Asia," and then declares that "the time has come for some new thinking." Now? Only now? Since the authors of the statement do care, they must have been

1 Senator Fulbright concluded his attack on U.S. policy in the Dominican crisis with the following sentence, which records in bronze the practical consequences of the anti-Communist nightmare: "The specter of a second Communist state in the Western Hemisphere and its possible political repercussions within the United States and possible effects on the careers of those who might be held responsible—*seems to have been the most important single factor in distorting the judgment of otherwise sensible and competent men*" (italics mine). *New York Times*, September 16, 1965.

thinking all these years. And what . . . ? No results? Nothing? Except this statement? Then what does it mean to issue a public invitation for "some new thinking?" Wouldn't it have been more gracious to wait until their thinking has produced something new before issuing statements about the inadequacy of other people's thinking?

Susan Sontag

As someone who has signed many of the petitions and ads from which the "Statement on Vietnam and the Dominican Republic" in the last PR wishes to distinguish itself, I found that statement quite mysterious. What were you trying to say? Whom were you trying to appease? Is it people like McGeorge Bundy and Chancellor Erhardt, who have complained lately about the impertinence and irresponsibility of intellectuals and writers shooting their mouths off in public about politics and disturbing the national consensus? I doubt if the carefulness of the statement in PR will reassure them.

The criticisms of American foreign policy voiced in the second and longer part of the statement in PR merely sum up, in a tone of mild firmness, what is being said about that policy by a great deal of informed opinion around the world. One can read the same, and more—I have been spending the summer in England and France—in the *Sunday Observer*, the *Guardian*, the *Economist* and the *New Statesman*, in *Le Monde* and *Le Nouvel Observateur*. That the American presence in Vietnam and the Dominican Republic is, in most respects, both immoral and impractical, I take to be a highly plausible, and *responsible*, position. . . . But it is the first part of the statement in PR that is interesting.

Those who signed it are apparently troubled that many other American critics of U.S. policy do not sufficiently dissociate themselves from the criticisms made in Hanoi, Peking, Moscow, and Havana. The statement in PR suggests that many who signed the earlier statements are being naïve about the extent to which the Vietnamese war is an international struggle and not just a civil war, are bestowing at least tacit approval on the Vietcong, and are indifferent to the likelihood of a "Communist take-over" in Southeast Asia. Even assuming all these things are bad (and I think the facts lead to a more complex judgment than that which the statement in PR suggests is the right one), I am convinced that a degree of political innocence and fellow-traveling that requires the answer made by the first part of the statement in PR is *not* to be found in the earlier statements. In short, I believe that the statement in PR embodies a presumptuous reading of the language of the earlier statements. Undoubtedly,

among the signatories of the earlier statements there are naïfs and “Mao-ists.” But every political gesture which has any hope of effectiveness is an exercise in coalition. And on the principle implicit in the first part of the statement in PR, one would be unable in 1936 to express outrage over the fascist insurrection in Spain without acknowledging the weaknesses of the government, protest against the House Un-American Activities Committee without affirming that one was against Communism, participate in civil liberties agitation without explaining that one deplores the mob violence of Los Angeles, or oppose the death penalty without setting forth a scheme for the reduction of violence in American life and the rehabilitation of murderers.

Petitions and ads taken out in the *New York Times* are, obviously, only a gesture. While steering between the ineffectual and the desperate, they do not supply information (at least, not much) or sustained analysis. The existence of I. F. Stone, putting out his *Weekly* and writing in the *New York Review of Books*, is probably worth more than all the statements put together. The attitudes of the growing body of Peace Corps veterans returning to America probably possess more depth and seriousness than the newly found political dissent of untraveled college students. But the statements do have a certain primitive educational effect—if only on the people who are moved to sign them, and then find themselves “having” a position, having “taken” a stand.

Both the stupidity and menace of, and the hope for, American foreign policy are rooted in the situation at home, in the fact that foreign policy decisions are taken by the present administration mainly because they are domestically popular. New Dealism at home and Goldwaterism abroad is the magic formula which the President has found to keep more people happy than ever before. Apart from the sustained analysis of American foreign policy that can be conducted only by informed students of world affairs like George Lichtheim and Oscar Gass and Hans Morgenthau (it would be foolish for the average intellectual or writer to claim competence in these matters), there is a place for a more emotional kind of appeal and attempt at reeducating America, as represented by the earlier petitions and statements. Most Americans are possessed by a profound chauvinism that is existential rather than ideological: they really do not believe that other countries, other ways of life, *exist*—in the way that they, and theirs, do. (One saw this, for example, in the pathetic rhetoric of Henry Cabot Lodge’s address to the Oxford Union in June; one sees it every day in the *malaise* and quotidian anxiety about “foreignness” of most Americans who are traveling abroad.) Whatever challenges this chauvinism, which is the basis of American consensus on foreign policy, is good—however simplified and unelaborated.

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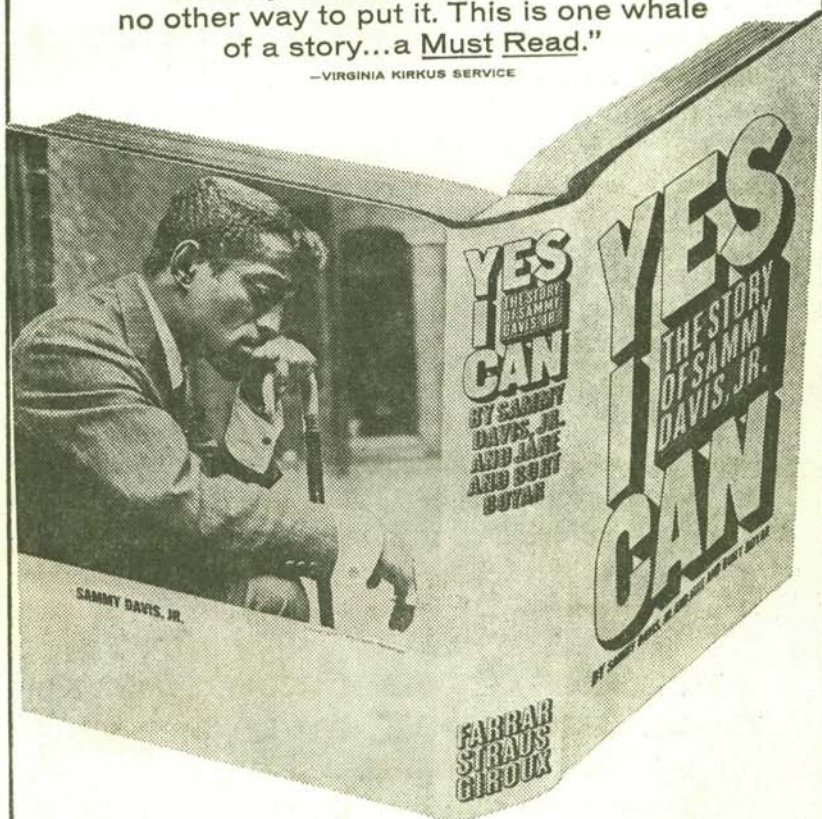
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OSIP MANDELSTAM

The tragic life of the brilliant Russian poet Osip Mandelstam—a Warsaw-born Jew who died in a labor camp near Vladivostok in 1938—has recently begun to emerge. Still largely suppressed in the U.S.S.R., Russian language editions of some of his literary works have appeared in recent years in the West. Now, with the publishing of *THE PROSE OF OSIP MANDELSTAM* the English-speaking world is introduced to Mandelstam's major prose works and a remarkably moving reflection of early 20th century Russia. Here is a sample of his unique prose style:

"If one went outside on one of those icy Crimean nights and listened to the noise of footsteps on the snowless clayey earth, frozen solid like our northern wheel tracks in October, if in the darkness one groped with the eyes among the city's hills—populated sepulchres, but with extinguished lights—if one swallowed that gruel of smothered life, thickened with dense barking of dogs and salted with stars, one began to sense with physical clarity the plague that had descended upon the world, a Thirty Years' War, with pestilence, darkened lamps, barking of dogs and, in the houses of little people, appalling silence." *Theodosia*, 1925

THE PROSE OF OSIP MANDELSTAM

The Noise of Time • Theodosia • The Egyptian Stamp

Translated,

With a Critical Essay, by

CLARENCE BROWN

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